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The Bride of **FRANKENSTEIN**

PANDORA'S BRIDE

A new novel by best-selling author
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CHAPTER 1

How could you imagine that fire would kill me? Fire gave me life! Lightning, the fire from heaven; the fire of Life itself, the fire of Prometheus, the fire of the gods that Man stole.

That *men* stole, actually; two men. Because I will make this an utterly factual memoir, and thus distinguish it from those fictional missives you may have encountered when you first heard of me, the creature men named the Bride of Frankenstein. In fact I was to be no male's bride: from the moment I knew fire and was thus born, my goal has always been to steal fire, and power, for myself. I am no man's creature and no man's possession.

Though I cannot deny that *men* were my progenitors. In this as in other things I was unnatural, although Dr. Pretorius, my beloved guide and parent, assured me that the day will come when infants will be born from glass alembics and that this will be as commonplace as the crueler, cruder, birth that leaves poor women dead as often as it leaves their infants alive.

My parents, if I can call them that, were Dr. Henry Frankenstein, and his mentor, Dr. Septimus Pretorius, who first taught the youthful Henry at University. Henry was a prig—so Dr. Pretorius said, anyway—exceedingly intelligent, extraordinarily ambitious but fearful of his own desires, and easily led by others. Which made him the ideal protégé for Pretorius, whose own ambitions were never less than godlike.

"Let us acknowledge *that* from the very *first*," he told me in his exaggerated aristocrat's drawl, sipping from his tumbler of gin (his one weakness, he often said, though in truth he had

many, many weaknesses and I suspect it was these that made him strong. "The Creator, whoever he—or she—was, made a *designed* sockup of mankind. Why, the very first thing Adam did was to fall from grace—though he had *help*, of course," he added, and arched one eyebrow as he gave me a look as fond as it was lascivious. "Then there was that little matter of Cain slaying Abel, and Sodom and Gomorrah..."

He poured himself another tot of gin and raised it in a toast to depraved humanity. "I suspect it was *guilt* as much as anything else that led the Creator to drown His (or Her) *sooties* with that forty-day flood. Though trust me, my dear, the day will come when humanity catches up with divinity in the destruction sweepstakes. Hah!"

And he laughed, leering at me through narrowed eyes as he sat his empty glass back down upon the laboratory table.

Ah, but you will wonder how it was we came to be in this room, with Pretorius's glittering equipment all around us and this sunlight filtering through the high casement windows, narrow and deep-cut as the clerestories in a great cathedral.

Because the rumor was that I was dead—burned to death in the fire that also took Pretorius's life. Henry Frankenstein's monster started that fire, hell-bent on destroying me and Pretorius, though for inexplicable reasons the monster let Henry and his insipid wife, Elizabeth, escape.

Or no, not inexplicable. I had been born scarcely an hour earlier; there had been time only for Pretorius and Henry Frankenstein to remove the shining array of equipment from my swaddled form, and then to clothe me in the white gown that was to be my wedding trousseau. The air in Henry's tower laboratory still stank of ozone and scorched metal from the lightning strikes that had given life to the inert form—*mine*—stitched together from cadavers and the firm bones of a nineteen-year-old woman stolen from her marble crypt. I

had been alive for less time than it has taken me to write of this, when Frankenstein's monster attempted to kill me.

And why?

Because even though so few minutes had passed, I already knew my own mind. Henry Frankenstein created me to be the mate of his monster. I had no other purpose, than to be the playmate and companion, yes, wife and *friend*, to that thing. You know what he—it—looked like. Stitched together from corpses and reeking of the grave, his already-dead flesh still curled from the flames that had nearly consumed his writhing form... when I first laid eyes upon him, the monster already had blood on its hands. It reeked of blood and decay; its very breath stank, and its ragged clothes.

And yet you pity it. And you think I was heartless because I rejected it outright, when all it wanted was a *friend*.

Well, I demand that you think of this: Who among you would have embraced this thing? Who among you would have consented to be wed to it, with no witnesses other than the strangers who gave you birth?

Ah, I didn't think so.

Immediately after raising me from the table where I had been given life, they dressed me in wedding raiment. This was Dr. Pretorius's idea. He has an antic wit, my Pretorius. The truth is, he could not have cared less if I wed Frankenstein's monster, or even if I wed Henry Frankenstein himself, or no one at all. For Dr. Pretorius, the quest for knowledge was all—note that I say "quest," rather than "attainment." Quests sometimes fail, just as marriages often do; but that mattered little to Pretorius.

"A wedding gown!" he crooned as he held it up before me, dangling from his outstretched arms as though it were another limp corpse. "See, my dear! For you..."

He dressed me then, Pretorius did. Henry was far too fastidious and obviously unnerved by my appearance; not to mention

my gown must have brought unpleasant memories to mind of his own recent, unhappily shadowed wedding to that turnip Elizabeth. I could not yet speak—my vocal chords were tight as wet rope—but you will recall that I did actually possess a mind.

Not a child's mind, either, but that of a young woman, murdered by Henry's assistant to provide a brain for his monster's bride. Her memories had died with her, but not, fortunately, the ripe gray matter of her cerebrum and medulla and cerebellum. The instant my eyes opened, my own consciousness began to colonize that *femina incognita*, and fill it with everything I saw and heard and touched and smelled and thought. So it was that I absorbed Henry's nervous, self-congratulatory prattle about "dear little Elizabeth," who would never have to think or work for herself.

Yet I also observed Dr. Pretorius's wryly knowing look, as he glanced from Henry to myself to the glistening white garb that enfolded me. And I also heard his words, murmured *otto voce* as he draped the gown across my naked torso, taking care not to disturb the bandages fresh upon my still-fragile white limbs.

"A pretty little frock, isn't it, my dear?" he crooned, looking sideways to see if Henry was listening. (Of course he was not; he was biting his thumbnail and staring anxiously out the window.) "Now, for most women such a lovely gown can be like a shroud, and marriage a sort of funeral for her own hopes and aspirations, should they be for anything other than, say, a dozen squawling brats and the nighttime gropings of her dimwitted spouse. But some women have more ambitious notions than that..."

Pretorius tugged a last fold of satin into place, then stared at me, a finger resting thoughtfully upon his lower lip.

"Now I wonder," he said, gazing at me with those icy pale eyes, "What sort of woman might you turn out to be?"

He did not have to wait long to find out. A few minutes later, Frankenstein's monster appeared, his great ugly form lumbering through the laboratory.

"Friend!" he grunted. "Wife!"

I reacted as any sane woman would: I screamed. If I could have spoken, my words would have been just as plain: Never! Not if I were to burn in hell for it!

I did not realize then how close to hellfire I truly was.

The monster reached for me. I recoiled, staggering on my weak limbs until Henry Frankenstein caught me; though I detected the ammoniac stink of fear and distaste emanating from Henry himself, even as he took my hands.

He is afraid of me. I thought in amazement. He is afraid! The realization came almost instantaneously upon my own instinctive rejection of the monster. *His loathing and horror of me are as keen as my own are toward that—thing.*

It was an extraordinary thought, especially when you consider it was almost the first one I ever had.

The monster reached for me again. I bared my teeth at it and hissed. I would have lunged at it and bitten it like an animal, had Henry not restrained me.

But at that moment Elizabeth appeared at the tower door—Elizabeth, whose only gift seemed to be showing up too late or too soon, then fainting dead away. My lip curled in disgust when I saw her, and when I saw the way Henry gazed at her. Jealousy on my part, some people have suggested, but I might as well be jealous of a slug, or a wilted dandelion. I loathed her and her type as much as I loathed the monster. More so, since I knew even then that the monster was less responsible for his own reactions than I was for mine. God, if there is a god, may have given Her creations free will, but men like Henry Frankenstein simply passed on their own weaknesses to their creations: jealousy and spite and lust and rage.

Whereas I had the gifts that Dr. Pretorius passed on to me while I was still in my glass-and-steel womb.

"I was the fairy at your christening," he told me much later in his secret refuge. "A *bad* fairy, men will say, with the *bad* fairy's gifts; but we know better, you and I—don't we, my dear?"

So he had given me beauty, and also the wit to use it: a driving thirst for knowledge; a keen impulse for self-protection, which spouted men have often termed spite.

And, while I did not know it yet, he had also given me the greatest gift of all: a woman's brain. Certainly I had wit enough to refuse the bridegroom Henry Frankenstein offered me. My rejection *outraged* the monster, but some other emotion—sympathy, perhaps, or envy—drove him to allow Henry and his wife, Elizabeth, to escape from the tower.

"Go!" the monster commanded them, his huge hand heavy upon the lever that would bring the laboratory's forces tumbling all around us. "Go, *now*!"

Henry fled. Coward that he is, he grabbed his *wheel-faced* wife and ran into the rain-swept night. Pretorius remained *waiting*:

"Stop!" He stared imploringly at the creature, then pulled me to his side. "Do not do this evil thing!"

"You love dead!" the monster retorted. "You belong with them."

And before either one of us could move the monster pulled the switch, with enough force that it snapped in his hand like a wishbone. There was a deafening explosion, loud enough to drown out the thunder raging outside; then a raging torrent of stones and mortar rained down from the tower high above us. The monster stood unmoving, its livid face lifted to the shining constellation of sparks that etched the darkness around it. For a moment a grim beauty enveloped it, that hollow nobility bestowed upon suicides and anarchists and madmen, all those driven to sacrifice themselves upon the altars of their own terrible belief. I gazed at it, heedless of the blaze erupting

around me, and in that instant wondered if, perhaps, I might have given my life to this creature.

But then a fiery beam *smashed* between us. Black smoke choked the tower; there was a series of explosions as bottles of stored chemicals erupted into flame, sending a poisonous haze roiling through the air. I heard a muffled shout and turned to see Dr. Pretorius staggering from the impact of a fallen chunk of stone.

"Run!" he gasped, and gestured weakly toward the door. "Quickly!"

I did not run. Flames edged the hem of my gown as I knelt beside him. I could not speak, but I gazed into his eyes and nodded as I gathered him into my arms and then, groaning, struggled to my feet.

"You are an angel," he whispered, though the fact was he weighed little—he was like an ungainly heron, all bone and beak and held breath. "Thank you . . ."

I turned and stumbled toward the door. My gown was in flames now, and I could smell the hot stink of burning hair—my own—though the pain seemed mercifully remote, like a wound dealt me in a dream. Around us swirled smoke and flame. A screaming sheet of fire tottered in the middle of the room, then suddenly lunged at me, its head a blackened stump and blazing arms outstretched. I clutched Dr. Pretorius more tightly, and ran.

Black smoke obscured the doorway, but I could just make out a gray lozenge, like the image in a mirror that has lost nearly all its silver. I staggered toward it, tripping over burning rubble and shattered glass. The screams of Frankenstein's creature became guttural moans, and then a hoarse choking sound that was horrible to hear. I climbed over a heap of blazing timbers, through the door and into the blessed rain.

Never did a raging storm feel or smell so sweet! I felt rain hiss upon my skin, extinguishing the flames that had devoured

my gown, leaving a spider's drizzle of ash and smoldering coils. My eyebrows, crown of hair was also burned away, but this proved a perverse blessing—had it not, the conflagration would surely have consumed my skull and face.

As it were, my burns were mostly superficial, though I did not know that at the time. I knew only that the rain fell sweet as a mother's kisses upon my bare skin, and that I held my cousin in my arms while all about us the night heaved and roared; and that we were both—miraculously, and despite the evil efforts of Science and Science's malformed prodigal son—alive.

CHAPTER 2

I carried Dr. Pretorius until we were a safe distance from the flaming wreckage of Henry Frankenstein's laboratory, then set him down. A wicked gash upon his shoulder bloomed red through the soaked fabric of his medical gown, but he was otherwise unharmed.

"Look at you," he said. Tenderly he stroked my scalp, the charred remnants of my glorious hair brittle as dead leaves. "My brave strong beauty! That was Nefertiti's crown I gave you, Nefertiti's face I sculpted from flesh and bone. But I swear, you have the soul and strength of Boadicea! What a warrior you might have made! As for this . . ."

He flicked a bit of scorched hair from his fingers into the rain. "It will grow back. And I hear that bobbed hair is all the rage now, in Berlin."

He laughed, then gazed past me to the ruined tower. "But we must leave this damned place, before those idiot villagers return. It would be just like Henry to lead them straight to us and collect a bounty on our heads."

He took my arm and steered me toward a rutted path that led downhill. It was swollen with rain and mud, but we made our way quickly, ducking beneath overhanging branches and clambering over tumbledown stone walls.

"I know someone with a hire car on the outskirts of town," Pretorius said as the first faint lights began to glimmer through the rain. "He asks few questions if the price is right . . ."

We found the car in an abandoned livery stable, its barn smelling of moldering hay and manure. A battered delivery wagon occupied the barn, a worn logo painted on its rusted doors.

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A number of curling photographs hung from the dank barn walls. These featured women in various stages of undress, posed with the same black hire-car that was parked in the middle of the barn. I looked at these curiously—I was now new-born to have any prurient interest in them. Pretorius only raised an eyebrow.

"To each his own," he said, then rang a bell on the barn door to summon the owner.

Minutes later, a sleepy-looking man in mechanic's overalls emerged from the shadows.

"Mein herr," Pretorius gestured wanly at me. "As you can see, my daughter and I have been set upon by brigands. Could you be so kind as to bring us to our home?"

The man yawned, regarding us suspiciously. I knew what he saw: a towering, gaunt man in a soot-stained medical robe, his lean face haloed by white hair singed during his recent misadventures in Henry's lab, his pale eyes slightly mocking despite his best efforts to look demure and in need of help.

That was Septimus Pretorius.

And, beside this imposing figure, there was me. A tall young woman wearing the scorched tatters of what appeared to be a wedding gown, arms covered with bandages gray with ash, dark hair burned to an unruly crop of tangled curls, streaked at each temple with a lurid lightning bolt of silver hair. Dirt and soot hid the scars that ran along my jaw and throat.

But nothing could hide my eyes, large and so dark a blue they looked black, or the delicately arched brows above them. Nothing could hide the fact that, despite my apparent injuries and the rags I wore, I was beautiful.

"Mmm, I dunno," the man mumbled. He shuffled his feet uneasily, but his gaze remained on me.

I stared back at him with grave innocence. What Pretorius had said was true enough, for what was I if not Pretorius's child, and who were Frankenstein and his creature but the basest sort of thieves, who had tried to steal our lives? I blinked, as though fighting tears, then opened my hands to him imploringly.

"I will, of course, pay you generously," Pretorius went on, jingling coins in his hand. "Please," he added, and put his arm around me. "She has been injured . . ."

Truly, I felt light-headed, and I was certainly pale enough. From somewhere in the distance, a faint wail of sirens joined with the wind. I could dimly hear shouts wafting down from the hills as we had just fled. Pretorius flashed me a look, then thrust several gold coins into the man's hand.

"I will double that when we arrive at our destination," he said, and without waiting for a reply opened the back door of the car and motioned me inside. "Quickly, please! My daughter will catch a chill!"

The man shrugged. Without a word he got into the driver's seat, moving aside a stack of the same sort of photographs that graced the barn walls.

"I see you are an art lover," said Pretorius as we drove off.

The driver grunted. "Times are hard. People can't afford food, let alone a hire car. In the city, a sausage costs a day's wages. I do what I need to get by."

Pretorius nodded in sympathy. "Yes, times are very difficult for the working people," he murmured. "And the government is precarious and corrupt. I wonder where it will all lead?"

His tone indicated he had a fair idea, but the man only nodded. "Straight to hell," he said, wheeling the car around a precarious turn. "Or to Berlin. Same difference."

Rain dashed at the windscreen, and wet leaves. I stared on at the hillside looming above us and saw pinpricks of torchlight zigzagging through the darkness. At the hill's summit, flickers of crimson and gold were the only sign of the destruction of Henry's tower; that and a lingering, acrid smell of smoke.

We drove through the village's narrow streets. Pretorius pointedly turned his face from the window, so he could not be glimpsed from outside. I did the same. If our driver noticed, he made no sign.

But as we reached the town's outskirts he glanced back at us—at me—then at Pretorius, and said, "You're a wise man to keep an eye on your daughter. Mine, now, she couldn't save enough for a dowry. Worked since she was a little thing, sending house here in town; then slaved as housekeeper for a doctor and his family. But what she earned, she couldn't live on that! She couldn't save enough to buy a husband."

He laughed harshly. "None of these young girls can. I did what I could to help her—"

He grabbed the photographs and brandished them at us angrily. "Her and her friends, I didn't want to see them leave the countryside. Leave their parents, everything they ever knew. But they did," he said. He threw the pictures aside in disgust and—I realized with some surprise—genuine anguish. "She left, my little Lucy, and went to Berlin. Said she could make more money there in a night, dancing in nightclubs, than she could earn here in a year. I couldn't argue with that," the man ended, and shook his head. "She sends what she can, to help me and her mother. I hate that it's come to this—a daughter, supporting her father! But what can you do?"

"You do what you have to," said Pretorius, and I was surprised that his tone was without irony. "You do what you have to do."

I stared at him. *You do what you have to do.*

I mouthed the words silently, then repeated them aloud. "You do what you have to do."

They sounded harsh and creaky, in my unused voice; but Pretorius turned to stare at me as though I had sung the "Ave Maria."

"My dear!" he gasped.

Because, of course, they were my first words. And what loving father would not thrill to hear his child speak thus: not barely intelligible gibberish but a bold declaration of intent?

"No, she's right," the driver said. He, of course, had no idea these were the first words I had ever uttered. "Spoken like a true German. Like a true Berliner, anyway," he added.

And, to my surprise, he winked at me.

By now we had reached the outskirts of the far side of town. Around us were the ancient brick and stone buildings of the slaughterhouse district. With streets so narrow the car had trouble rounding corners. The cobblestones were slick with rain. Furtive figures moved through the shadows, stooping over dustbins and piles of refuse.

"Those poor souls," said the driver. "Rummaging through garbage to find food for tonight's supper." As the car crawled past one emaciated form, the figure turned to display a skeletal face, lips bared in a fetal grimace, strands of limp, wet hair stuck to her hollow cheeks.

A woman, I realized in shock: a woman like myself. But what was even more shocking was the look she gave me, compounded of fear and hatred and disdain; an expression not dissimilar to that which I had shown to Frankenstein's monster.

"Nothing goes to waste here," Pretorius agreed. "Offal, skin, even raw bones—they boil them for soup, then crush them to a pulp. The abattoirs do a booming business these days."

"Not just with pigs and cattle, either," said our driver. "You heard about those grave robbers? Not to mention that girl snatched from the street the other night. Never even found her body."

"Really?" Pretorius's eyes widened in mock dismay, but he saw his mouth twitch slightly. "How perfectly horrid!"

"It's true." The man lowered his voice and gave a backward glance to the cadaverous figure scurrying back into the shadows. "Last night, old Bernd down at the tavern told me he heard the girl had been killed and eaten. *Eaten, like the way no better than a sow.*"

"Oh, surely not," said Pretorius. "Surely there would be far more *imaginative* uses for a lovely young corpse, I mean, other than strictly from a medical standpoint," he added, then pressed her the window. "Oh, look, my dear—we're almost home! You can drop us here at the corner, my good man, and I thank you very kindly for your assistance."

The car stopped in front of a crumbling brick building, many stories high, each level in even worse repair than the one below it. Carved stone cornices projected from each corner, ornamented with small misshapen figures. Gargoyles, I thought.

But as I stared, first one and then another of the little grotesques rose and scurried into the shadows above us.

"Father," I croaked, trying to form a question; but Pretorius cut me off.

"There there, my dear, be a good girl and wait for me by the door out of the damp," he chided. "And here, my good man—"

I went obediently to the door. Rain dripped from the eaves onto my head. Behind me I heard the car's driver gasp, and a low chuckle from Dr. Pretorius.

"Please, accept it with my heartfelt thanks," he said. He raised a courteous hand to the driver, then bowed. "Perhaps you can put it aside, so that you and your good lady-wife might someday go visit your daughter in Berlin, before it burns completely to the ground."

The driver's eyes shone as brightly as the coin he held up in thanks.

"Bless you, sir," he said. "And your daughter, too." And with a final wink in my direction, he drove his car into the night.

"Come, my dear," said Pretorius as he hustled past me and shoved a key into the lock. "I didn't battle Heaven and Hell and a pinch of bad weather, to lose you to a fever from standing in the rain!"

He pushed the great naked door. It struck and groaned upon its hinges. Pretorius took a deep breath and turned to thrust his shoulder against the panels; when suddenly the door swung open.

"Father, Father!" piped a chorus of shrill voices. I gazed at the floor in astonishment. There stood an entire small army of shadowy figures, none taller than my knee, writhing and dancing in such excitement that I recoiled against Pretorius.

"Children! Hush," he said, half-laughing as he closed the door behind us. "Look, I've brought you a sister!"

Pretorius reached for the gas-lamp by the door. The lantern flared, the darkness dispersed; and all of a sudden I could see clearly who—what—gathered there to welcome me.

"Witness the Children of Cain," said Dr. Pretorius.

CHAPTER 3

They were the children of nightmares; twisted, deformed creatures that might have been yanked from the medical jar Henry Frankenstein kept on shelves in his office. There was a thing that was all head, its spindly legs no thicker than a hair-ribbon. Another monster was nothing but a single gleaming eye that could have fit into my cupped hands. It stared at me unblinking, because it had no lid, no skull, no means of locomotion save the tiny figure who carried it in her arms, a perfectly formed woman like a breathing doll, save only for the glistening gray nub of her exposed brain, the skull peeling from it like birch bark.

There was an infant whose mouth was filled with pointed white teeth as long as my fingers; a disembodied hand that scuttled across the floor then lifted itself to reveal a constellation of five shining blue eyes upon its palm. A little man as rayed as a king, pompous and so obviously beleaguered by this fantastical menagerie that despite my shock I laughed at his discomfort. A shivering sluglike thing that left a wet trail across the stone floor, but raised its head to display the lovely face of a sea-nymph wrenched from her native element.

"But—what are they?" I stammered.

"As I told you," said Pretorius. He stooped and held out his hands. "The Children of Cain."

The wriggling monsters nuzzled around him like tiny nurslings, whispering and chuckling with delight. A strong odor rose from them, decay but also a sweet stink as of over-ripe fruit, salt, and fetid gases; and a very faint fragrance of lime-blossom.

"Come now, my dears!" crooned Dr. Pretorius. "Yes, yes, of course, I missed you too—"

He stroked them and kissed them as though they were children. Then he stood and began to make his way to the next room, careful always not to tread upon them.

I followed. I was pleased—flattered, really—to see that the little mermaid had attached herself to me, clinging to my torn gown like a starfish.

"They are the forgotten children of Science," Pretorius said when I repeated my question. "The stillborn infants, the experiments gone awry; the foundlings hatched from monstrous unions, that Henry and his like destroyed when they did not match their expectations."

"Or *thought* he destroyed," he added. With a smile, he stooped to pick up an imp with huge eyes and two long fangs, its eight-fingered hands ending in claws like scalpels. The grotesque creature promptly sank its teeth into Pretorius's arm, but the doctor didn't blink. After a moment the imp's eyes closed: it was blissfully asleep.

"See?" said Pretorius. He gently set the creature down, its snores like the buzzing of a trapped wasp. "The urge to rend and devour is as powerful as the urge to love and procreate. Who are we to determine that one desire is more worthy than another?"

He paused and with a flourish indicated a large dining room, empty save for a long table and a few ramshackle chairs.

"Sit, my dear," he said. "I will attend to the little ones and make sure they've been fed. Cesare will stay with you until I return."

He looked down at the roiling figures at his feet. "Yes, yes, my children—but first, can you say goodnight to your sisters?"

A chorus of squeals and grunts and growls rose around me. I cringed but at the same time I laughed.

Because, horrible as they appeared, there was something valiant and even lovely in their presence, in their raw existence

and the manner in which they stared at me without utterance or guile. Perhaps a nightmare. I thought, exposed to it all of day, becomes a beautiful thing.

"But what is her name?" A thin voice rose above the dream-sound like paper rustling. I looked down and saw I was at the mermaid, one webbed hand clucking her throat as she spoke.

"Her name?" echoed Pretorius. He gazed at me with a question.

"Why yes, of course—you must take a name."

He brooded for a moment, long fingers curling up and down. At last he said, "I will have to give it some thing."

It felt strange to taste the idea in my own mouth, a woman's name. Would it become me? Would I shape myself to it?

"We might call you Lilith," Dr. Pretorius said at a moment.

"She was Adam's first wife," the woman behind me and above me chose him, the woman who was not muddled from his own need and need for control. She had great power, and was better and she went on to use that power. She has been no other since then, of course," he added, and shrugged. "But we know the truth of it."

He smiled. "I wonder if it would suit you? He opened his hands, and I saw the two tiny red scars left above his wrists by the needle-fanged imp. "It is your choice. Everything is your own choice."

"Lilith." I pronounced the name again, ran my tongue over it to determine if it were sweet or bitter. Both. I thought. Lilith the bittersweet.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't think I like the idea of being any man's wife. Even briefly."

Pretorius laughed. "Someday, a woman will write of the New Eve, born of Man her betrayer, and of her triumph over him. But for now, my dear daughter, you must wait for a name. Maybe once you have further mastered the art of speech, and of writing, you will set pen to paper and tell your

own story. And you will perhaps mention my small part in it," he said with resigned modesty and laughed again. "but first I must care for my bride! I will send Cesare to keep you company—"

And with a flourish he was gone, attended by his uncanny henchings. I wandered around the empty room, listening to rain tap at the windows. In one glass pane I found my own reflection and stared at it.

My hair had been turned away. Not completely, but the long sweep and up-lift Pretorius had taken such care to shape was gone. Instead, a ragged satellite of black and silver sprang out around my face. My fine features were smudged with ash, my cheeks touched with soot. Groggily I traced the soot on my chin at then spoke the name. Septimus had suggested aloud, so see now I asked when I spoke it. *Lilith. Lilith.*

"It is not my name," I said at last.

"No, it is not."

I turned. A tall young man stood behind me, clad all in black. His face was even more pale than my own—dead-white, gray-white. His glittering eyes sunk in dark circles above hollow cheeks and a thin-lipped mouth. I gazed at him, unsure whether to cry out to Dr. Pretorius for help.

But then I saw that the pallor of his face was heightened by rice powder, the sunken cheeks carefully enhanced by the application of rouge. The deepest eyes burned all the brighter because they had been rimmed with kohl.

And the thin mouth smiled, as he held out a strong hand to grasp my own.

"I'm Cesare, Dr. Pretorius's assistant. Also his very trusted friend." He had an educated voice, undercut by a world-weariness, an edge of cynicism, that I would come to learn was a native Berliner's accent. "He asked that I see to you—but apparently you've been seeing yourself—"

He pointed at my reflection in the rain-streaked window and laughed. "An interesting costume you have there."

He touched my singed hair and shook his head. "Well, we can see to that with a pair of scissors. In the meantime, I'm heating you a bath, and I'll see what I can find in the way of clothes for you. Are you hungry?"

Until that moment, I had no idea what hunger was. I was new-born, remember, and even this I had to learn.

But as soon as he spoke the word *hunger*, I felt faint.

"Yes," I said, and clasped his hand more tightly lest I fall.

"Please, I think I must be very hungry..."

"Come on, then."

He brought me to a smaller room, a kitchen. Smoke leaked from an ancient woodstove, but a large pot simmered on the fire, and it gave off a wonderful smell. At the foot of the stove, a big dog lay dozing. As we approached, it woke and rose with a yawn. Cesare scratched its head.

"Good Goli," he said as it licked his hand. It wasn't until the dog pattered from the room that I saw it had not four legs, but six.

"Wirsing kafeintopf," announced Cesare, and removed the lid. "Cabbage soup maybe not what one would request for their first meal, but in prison I know several men who requested it."

He laughed again, and began ladling the soup into an earthenware bowl.

"You were in prison?"

He handed me the bowl and a tin spoon and demonstrated how to eat. "Like this—be careful, it's hot. Yes, I was in prison. More than once, in fact."

"But why?" I took a tentative sip from the tin spoon, and began to eat ravenously.

"I'd be out on a *Bummel*, a midnight walk around the prison, and the police would bring me in. They'd accuse me of doing

a wild-boy—you know, a line-boy. When the truth is I have an illness that makes me fall asleep without warning during the daytime, and so I am often awake at night, and I walk, endlessly. It is the closest I get to sleep, sometimes, and dreaming. That's how I met Dr. Pretorius—he saw me once when I was walking along the Laurensstraat in broad daylight, when I suddenly collapsed. The police thought I was drunk, but Dr. Pretorius had been watching me for some time and knew I wasn't drunk—I'd just fallen asleep without warning. He recognized my illness. Narcotism, it's called. He's been treating it with opium, but he doesn't think I'm getting better. He says it's a dream from which I might never awaken."

"A dream?"

"Yes." Cesare's expression grew soft. "Septimus sees the world within the world. He is always seeking to free it—to release the inner world that is imprisoned in the world we see here, now, all around us."

He gestured at the dark little kitchen, its broken window patched with newspaper, the holes in the floor, the gummy pot on the woodstove.

"There is beauty here, too," he said. "As there is beauty in you. And me. And in the Children of Cain."

I finished the soup and Cesare refilled my bowl. "What does he mean to do with them?" I asked.

"To do with them?" Cesare raised one finely plucked eyebrow. "You might as well ask what does he mean to do with *me*—with me! He wishes only to protect them. To give them life, and then to set them free."

I thought of the way Dr. Pretorius had gathered his unsettling creations around him; with affection and tenderness but also with a certain perverse pride.

I said, "He seems more ambitious than that."

"Oh, he is extremely ambitious." Cesare nodded and ladled some soup into a cracked cup. "He would be a god—but a benign

CHAPTER 5

The next few weeks passed in a sweet, liminal haze. I was in a half-lit world. . . . warren, inhabited by people who I came to regard as ubiins and vex, beloved food. . . . sun did appear. . . . sunlight. . . . those rare occasions when the sun did appear. . . . I tried to pierce the smog, to find a ray of light. Dr. Pretorius's grin hid away.

And yet inside we were water, clumps, and lumps. . . . other company. I had no prior experience of anything. . . . I had no prior experience of anything. . . . yet I can say now that those days were among the happiest of my peculiar, irregular puzzle life.

Each morning one of the Chandra of Cain would wake me. They were truly like children in this as in so many things, squabbling among themselves for the honor of climbing any footstool to yank the blankets from my bed so that I would spring up with a mock shriek. They'd scream or growl then scuttle off into the corridor, mewling in delight as I dressed quickly, in the thin light that leaked from my room's tiny window. We would then all assemble in the kitchen, where Cesare had prepared whatever he could find in the way of food. A gruel made of sprouted turnips or green onions, soup flavored with a single meatless bone, gray gelatin boiled from horses' hooves and seaweed.

No one ever complained. We ate better than many of our neighbors in those days, because we ate. At least once a week, Dr. Pretorius would give an account of another poor soul who had starved to death in the rain and cold.

"Trace it, Heger," he would say, shaking his head. Or "How many berries did I eat last time?" I'd say, "Just one." I where our food came from. Sometimes these women would knock on the door in the middle of the day or at night, and Dr. Pretorius and Cesare would venture out with the doctors up, black-sailed.

"Tending night," he'd say. Dr. Pretorius would say, "How many berries did I eat last time?" I'd say, "Just one." I where our food came from. Sometimes these women would knock on the door and beg the poor doctor for a taste. And it was nearly always women who were at the door, offering us the meager offerings on our doorstep: mounds of cold blue wine and half-grown sausages, sprays of dried bread, stiff planks of cured bacon. On rare occasions, the offerings came from wealthier patients: a bottle of aquavit, a tin of caviar and preserved loganberries.

We're reverting to a feudal society. Cesare said. He put the loganberries on a high shelf, at the top of our greedy little companions. Soon the plague will come and sweep us all away. In the meantime, though.

He looked at me and grinned. "If someone brings us a few eggs, and a bit of flour, we'll have cake."

I spent most of my time reading. Dr. Pretorius had a fine library, heavy on the classics. I might never know the identity of the woman whose mind and memories I'd locked inside my skull, but every day I thanked her for knowing how to read. I struggled at first, but soon was able to make my way through Goethe, and then a new novel by a doctor that had become a cause celebre, according to Cesare. After several weeks I found that I could not only read German, but French and English as well. The poor soul who'd given me her brain had evidently possessed a well-educated one.

But my reading was not all so light-hearted. Sometimes Dr. Pretorius would bring home stacks of magazines. I pored over

these for hours, trying to make sense of the young, young men and women—my contemporaries—dressed in evening clothes, or furs or other fancy dress, the women so heavily made up, the men almost in tatters of business suits.

When I didn't understand something, which was frequently the case, I never got accustomed to it in any manner of falling asleep in the middle of a discussion of last year's more recent cataclysm that had rent all of Europe.

"The great war! The great darkness!" he cried. "And in this case, there's little hope of nothing, not a word of it, any way. Just more dark. And rain!" he added, gazing at a picture curtain that streamed relentlessly down the window.

A month or so after my arrival, Cesare was captured in Pretorius on one of his mysterious night missions in the countryside. I was alone in the house—was alone as one could be, anyway, surrounded by a score of squabbling humans—when the doorbell jangled.

I set aside my book. The Children of Cain abruptly felt numb. In my lap, the needle-toothed imp gnawed anxiously at my hand.

"Stop that," I said, and stood. The bell sounded again, louder this time. I looked at the homunculi and drew a finger to my lips. Dr. Pretorius had warned me against ever letting anyone into the house in his absence. More than anything, he had warned me against ever letting anyone see his creations.

"They would be destroyed," he said, and his voice made my skin prickles. And there would be nothing I could do to save my children.

Now they clustered around my knees, their goblin faces twisted with terror.

"Li-li-li," the imp chattered. In her glass bowl, the sea-nymph made her high fluting call.

"Shhh!" I said, and thrust the bowl behind a curtain. "Go," I commanded the others in a low voice. "Into the basement. A—no. I'll show you back behind the cold cellar. I'll come get you as soon as it quiet. And for heavens' sake, be quiet!"

They scumbled for the cellar steps as the bell rang a third time. I stood apart as a strange, thoughtful baying, as the six-legged dog leapt up itself against the door. Cesare was always careful to lock it up before he left the house.

I crept into the hallway until I stood in front of the door. I was quite sure it would have taken a battering ram to break through, and no one could see me through the massive, oaken panels. And Dr. Pretorius and Cesare had both made a deal that I was not to open it, no matter what.

"Septimus!" I jumped as a woman's voice rang out over the infernal clamor of the bell. "In God's name let me in—*it's Elizabeth!*"

A woman! The only female face I had ever seen was that of Elizabeth Frankenstein, whom I despised.

But *Elizabeth's* voice. Elizabeth's voice. "Septimus!" she called again, urgency striving with real fear. "Please, don't leave me for them to—" I hesitated, then took a deep breath, silently turned the lock, and cracked the door open.

But before I could breathe a word, whoever was on the other side kicked the door inward, knocking me down as she stumbled inside and slammed it shut again.

"Took you long enough!" She pulled the lock back into place and turned. "I could've—" Her words died as she stared at me. "You're not Cesare."

"No." "Huh." She leaned forward and struck a finger under my chin, tipping my head back so she could look me full in the face. "You're not even a boy! Bit of an improvement, now that you mention it."

She grinned a young woman a few years older than her hennaed hair in a fashionable bob. Her face powdered white and her lips carmine with rouge. She had her finger and thumb the color of blue bottle glass, so thickly knotted it seemed to wear a domino's mask. She wore a blue sailor's suit and a short silk skirt. Her stockings were decorated with darker stripes and chunky blue pumps decorated with a darker stripe.

"Then," she held out her hand and looked at me expectantly. Her fingernails were long and pointed a tiny, delicate, delicate blood red. It took me a moment to realize she was waiting for me to kiss it. I did so clumsily. Then asked her eyes, "And you would be . . ."

"Pandora."

"Well, Pandora." She swept past me to the next room. "Where's Septimus? Oh, Cesare."

"I don't know."

"You don't know." She stopped and regarded me coldly. "You better not be lying to me, Miss Pandora. Because Septimus's here is on the docket—Cesare's too."

"And yours, for that matter," she added, with a look that suggested this wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing. "The whole little menagerie's going to go right up in smoke, if you're sure they're not here?"

I nodded. Then sighed noisily and flopped onto the threadbare chaise-lounge. In that case, might as well have a smoke."

She took out a red lacquered cigarette case. "Want one?" I refused but watched with great interest as she fit the cigarette into a gold-tipped holder, then lit it with an engraved lighter.

"A gift," she said airily. "I got my fiance. One of 'em, anyway."

She blew a smoke ring at me. "So, Pandora."

She glanced at my trousers and worn woolen jacket, then reached for my shirt. I flinched as she tugged it free and peered at the scars on my neck. "I gather you're another one."

"Another one what?"

She leaned back on the chaise. Her eyes narrowed. "Well, you don't look like a total fool for starters, so that just proves one point. Another of his—work. His creations—she went on, and sent another smoke ring floating toward me. "And don't look at me like that! I'm not one. Bona fide I angel. I angel girl, that's me!"

She handed me her cigarette and hopped to her feet, exclaiming, "a near high kick followed by a cartwheel; pivoted and flapped her skirt (affording me a good view of her garters and quite a lot more), then bowed and jumped back onto the chaise."

"If Septimus could figure out a way to create women who do what we'd all be rich," she said, and grabbed her cigarette from me. "I could teach you," she added, then shook her head. "But you don't look like the dancing type. No, this girl-boy thing you've got going—it works for you. Very *garçonne*. You need a job, let me know—I can get you into the floor show at the Zau before anytime. Can you stand on your head?"

Before I could reply she said, "Listen, we can chat about that any old time. I came here to warn Septimus. But since you're tending the zoo this evening, I'll pass my news onto you. Someone's been trading on his good name. His *bad* name, I should say."

She stood and stalked to the window, drew the curtain, and gazed outside. Her pert expression hardened. "Did you ever hear of a woman named Greta Haller?"

"No."

"Me neither—until her head turned up in a milk van when it made its delivery to the club last week. Before that it was another girl, a Berliner, only in her case it wasn't just her head but her legs as well. Nice gams, too," she said with a tinge of regret. "I could've gotten her a place in the chorus line, if she'd wanted it. But she was a *Tauntensgirl*, a working girl—a *nice*

working girl, my fiancé knew her. My other fiancé, the
Creta was from here—in the country, and then a
farm girl earned up in pieces in a different way, a
family way she was too. Although she

I looked at her, confused. I don't understand any of
us didn't commit these crimes. He said she was a
"Liebchen" when I had said she was a "Goli."

do you think you got here. The stocker

She walked over and yanked back my shirt as if to expose
my scars. "Septimus didn't commit the crime, but
neck, but someone did. Maybe the same one who pa-
Creta and my fiancé's pillow had a hand in that began here."

She drew her finger across her throat. I scowled and pushed
her away, buttoning my shirt. "I know where I came from
And I know Dr. Pretorius is incapable of such a thing."

Thea laughed. "You have no idea what he's capable of. I do.
And believe me, he's done worse. All in the name of Science
and Reason, of course."

She drew herself up, then declaimed in marvelous imitation
of Dr. Pretorius's stentorian voice, "Trust me, my dear, the day
will come when humanity catches up with divinity in the destruction
of the stakes." Not bad, eh?

I continued to scowl, but said nothing. From upstairs came
a volley of barks. Thea walked into the hall, put two fingers in
her mouth, and let loose an ear-splitting whistle. The oaks
gave way to frenzied yelps, followed by the sound of frantic
scratching and the thud and crash of a locked door giving way.
Moments later Goli raced into the room and sprang, with all
six legs, toward Thea.

"Good dog, there's a good dog!" she crooned, nearly top-
pling as Goli fawned over her. "Go on, now, do your job and
keep watch. Can't trust this one to do it."

She made a face at me. Look, I could say "What, were you
born yesterday?" Of course you were, practically, but that's no
excuse for being Jack. Septimus Pretorius breaks all kinds of
laws. Some of them are Man's laws, and some of them are God's
laws, but some of them are women's laws. I've never known him
to hurt a woman, infant, child, or grown. Out there in the
country they think he's a saint, for all he does for them. I'm the only
doctor—the only man—any of the midwives trust. If those
heads and legs belonged to a man, Septimus would be the first
one I'd suspect of having a hand in the matter. But a woman's

She shook her head vehemently and bent to stroke Goli's
head. A faint clamor of complaint and peevish noise echoed
from the basement. I went to the door and opened it, then
retrieved Undine's bowl from behind the curtain. The children
of Cain came wiggling and crawling and bounding across
the room, ignoring my commands for silence.

Septimus's bowl back on the floor, turned to confront
Thea. "Then who are you here? If you know Septimus is inno-
cent, why aren't you back with your Langel-Langel friends?"

"Because it's my night off. And because people in this village
aren't as smart as I am—they're not as smart as Goli. Some-
one's feeding them a line of lies about Septimus—and about
you, Liebchen. Darling, rumors are rife."

"Me? What rumors?"

"That Septimus has been kidnaping young women and
murdering them for spare parts, and that you're his accom-
plice. They think he's creating an entire army of uber-women
to take over the countryside, kill off the men, and set up a
new republic of free-thinking *blau-stockings* in their place.
Interesting notion," Thea added.

"I have never killed anyone," I said angrily. "It is not within me."

Thea laughed. "Not within you? How can you possibly
know what is within you?"

She nudged her brother with the toe of one high-heeled shoe. Cesare yawned and got groggy in his feet. "Septimus," he asked, staring blearily at Dr. Pretorius, hurried down the steps. "I thought we were going to see the abattoir this morning."

"There's been a change of plans," Dr. Pretorius said, rising from the near darkness ahead of us. "I have some business in the city that needs tending. Come along, children."

So we all followed him downstairs. Cesare and Thea, like myself, laden with heavy satchels and birdap sacs, the children of Cain slucking and whooping as they went, in some remote version of a Sunday School psalm, and I, as I did, bearing upon its mouth a basket that held a lime, a net, plus food.

We packed out was carefully, through the door, a new cellar, until we reached a small, dark room. A key was in the trap door, rusted, humming, in the center.

"Pandora, here," yours the strongest," Dr. Pretorius's lantern swung back and forth as he gestured at the ground. "Open it for us, now there's a dear girl."

I bent, grabbed the ring, and tugged. The door groaned and creaked. Then, in an explosion of phosphorescent ooze and foul-smelling earth, it opened.

"Phew!" Thea pulled a handkerchief from her reticule and covered her nose. "Smells like something died in there."

"Not recently, I'm afraid," said Dr. Pretorius with regret. "This used to serve as my storeroom, in more productive times. But come along, my dears, come along—"

The passage was so low-ceilinged that we all had to stoop save for the dog and the cowering homunculi. In Dr. Pretorius's house I had often looked through a hook that contained plates by a man named Hieronymus Bosch. Dr. Pretorius said he found it "inspiring"—and now I felt as though I'd fallen into one of those pictures. The torchlight picked out unsettling forms

on the earthen walls—mummified fingertips, the faint impression of an anguished face, yellowing bits of bones and widowed hair. Foul fumes sprouted everywhere and gave off a putrid scent, whose road I upon. Here and there, tiny chinks in the wall let in a sliver of gray light. I did my best to step carefully, and to avoid what unseen things broke on, once, writhed beneath my footstep.

We seemed to walk endlessly, though when I, Thea, complained as my chest ached, said it had been less than an hour.

"Not so bad," panted Thea. "Or skipwalking. I mean, I've torn my stockings again!"

"I've been the way before," Cesare said evenly. "Not for some time, but it's not a route one forgets."

"I'd pay extra to forget it!" Thea grumbled. "Damn, then, go on, my other feet."

Black, radiantly the darkness gave way to a pallid, luscious dawn, though we'd ventured into a world illumined solely by those glowing fungi. It was not the fungus, though, but the tunnel's end—a latticework screen of rusted metal that Septimus and Cesare tugged at until it gave way and revealed the odorous expanse of a large stable.

"Quietly now," Dr. Pretorius commanded, and slipped into the shadows.

The homunculi grew subdued, intimidated perhaps by the strange surroundings. Only Goli raced about and snuffed excitedly at the earthen floor. Thea paused to examine her ruined shoes.

"So much for being a slave to fashion." She gave a weebegone look at her torn stockings, then shrugged. "Maybe I'll start a trend—what do you think? It could catch on."

"I think if that's the worst you have to deal with, we'll be in good shape," I said, and went to look for Dr. Pretorius.

The building was expansive but seemingly abandoned, except by rats. These were as numerous as they were fearless, their

"Everyone?" retorted Thea. She could hardly see him as he shook her head. "You might as well hand a gun to a blind man."

Cesare looked at her sheepishly. "Seeing as you are a doctor, once we get out into the streets here, I'll be able to find my way."

Thea sighed. Well, where we reach it, that's all we can do. Berlin—it will be easier to disappear from me than from you. But I'll be sure to let you know the first time I see you too. But I'll be sure to let you know the first time I see you too. But I'll be sure to let you know the first time I see you too.

Cesare! Dr. Prentiss called to him. The first time I see you too. But I'll be sure to let you know the first time I see you too. But I'll be sure to let you know the first time I see you too.

Cesare went down the stairs. Thea took a peck which was a very good thing. The miniature set of stairs at the back of the wagon was much of the same. Thea took a peck which was a very good thing. The miniature set of stairs at the back of the wagon was much of the same. Thea took a peck which was a very good thing. The miniature set of stairs at the back of the wagon was much of the same.

"Well, there's not a lot of room here," observed Thea. "But what there is, is choice."

It was certainly far more comfortable than the quarters back at Dr. Prentiss's flat. But much more cramped, as we discovered moments later, when Goli lumbered in, trailed by the Children of Cain. The dog settled on the floor. The grotesques, squabbling and squalling as usual, fought for space on a window seat. I had taken Undine from Goli's basket. Now I placed her carefully at

one end or the window, where she would be protected from the children of Cain. The world outside Thea and I were only a few feet away. The children of Cain were only a few feet away. The children of Cain were only a few feet away. The children of Cain were only a few feet away.

And, with an abrupt lurch and a bone-chilling shriek from the children of Cain, the caravan rolled forward. "Well, well, well," cried Thea, and grabbed my hand.

We lunged out of a window and peered down. Cesare and Dr. Prentiss were in front, holding Scharf against the reins, which were slack. A leather hook could restrain the immense beast at a moment's notice. A vapor billowed from its nostrils as it moved its head, and gnashed its razor teeth. As we rolled down the hill, its hooves came out onto the chilly dawn, and sparks flew from its hooves when they struck rocks on the muddy path.

The rain had let up; mist rose from the autumn hills, tangling with woodsmoke from distant farmsteads. The trees had turned from green to gold to brown. Wet leaves clogged the rutted byway, and the Children of Cain whooped and shrieked as we bumped across furrows and broad muddy swaths where rain had swept the road clear of gravel and stone. Behind us the towers and turfed roofs of the village faded into a gray blur of woodsmoke. Ahead of us rolled the countryside, with famine-bound farms and numberless villages that all the young people had fled—young men to the war that had claimed so many millions, young women to the cities, to try their luck at something other than backbreaking farm labor and housework, childbirth and childrearing.

Somewhere in all that patchwork of barren fields and broken castles and forests, Henry Frankenstein hunted me. The image of his twisted face flashed through my mind, the memory of his voice as he took aim with his pistol and I saw his gaze, aflame

with rage and loathing. As though he had an arrow in his
sights, some predatory wolf, and for a moment his fingers
along the scars on my neck, imperfectly bridled, as
ridge of bone above my temple.

You're not really alive, Thea! he said. *He's for the show and*
companionably beside me now. *He'll never let the Pretorius*
break show, didn't change then.

I stared out at the passing fields and woods and woods.
Big as the world was, it suddenly didn't seem so big.

CHAPTER 7

As the days passed, it didn't take long for us to fall into a routine.
We ate, rather dull, Tansy's fantastical but delicious wild toll
in the village square. Or, if there was no village, in the he
rally we'd find an unusual food and send Thea to the market
to buy it. Here she'd charm the landowner (and sometimes
his wife or widow) into letting us set up for the night. Money
occasionally passed hands, but Thea's flirtatious manner, and I
suspected, her flexible morals; by the end of a night's show, if
we'd a dozen new fiancés) was usually enough to get us a place to
sleep, and then the job fell to Cesare, but his abrupt plunges
into sleep made this a riskier endeavor.

And Dr. Pretorius wanted to save me for the evenings show.

So the task remained Thea's. She seldom seemed to mind.

Once the wagon had stopped, Cesare would free Schattengeist
from his traces and tether him to the largest tree we could
find, using a length of chain that had previously moored a
tagboat to a dock. The demonic horse would graze not on
grass but on squirrels and coney and any other small animal
foolish enough to come within reach of its snapping jaws. When
rabbits were scarce, Thea was dispatched to the farmhouse
again for any scraps of meat or bone that could be spared.

It was not a bad life. We were among intelligent friends, we
enjoyed much laughter, and shared what food we had. At
night Thea and I would crawl into our sleeping alcove, while
Dr. Pretorius and Cesare stayed long awake, smoking and
drinking tumblers of gin, their laughter rocking the caravan
until, sometime before dawn, their voices finally grew quiet.

But some nights I lie as would be off my feet, my friends," as she put it, and snuggling in her collected and wrapped in blankets though the shift never but a few of my companions. I would trace the pattern marks along my arms and legs and then a sea of red-stained rain, the world belonged to me. I thought and dreamt and I saw Pandora, and not in the poor, dead girls whose bodies and organs were now mine.

It was on one such night that I heard one thing, a caravan. Or perhaps I only imagined it. It was something crashing through the wilderness, a great and something big and clumsy.

And seemingly in pain. It clanked like a little up in slaughterhouse, so loudly I wanted to fly from my window and stumble to the window.

But then noises continued unabated, a soft rumbling from the other side of the stone wall, while the thing outside came out again like a belling stag.

And yet as I sat up and listened I knew that what I heard was not a brute animal's voice but a man's. A man's voice flensed of word or meaning, of anything but blunt anguish and, yes, loneliness.

The most terrible, most solitary cry I have ever heard. I clutched the blankets to me not for warmth but protection, as though they would hide me from whatever was out there. I don't know how long I sat there, trying not to breathe, terrified that whatever lumbered through the trees would find its way to the caravan—to me—and rip away its walls as easily as a hand tears through a spider's web.

But then its cries diminished, and the sound of underbrush crushed beneath its feet as it stumbled off. Still I would not let

myself fall asleep, not until sunlight seeped through the cracks in the walls and I heard Thea's laughter as she staggered into the kitchen, demanding her breakfast.

But at my eyes, however, were as routine as my afternoon school routine, I trembled in preparation for the evening show. We would see the side, two, with its loud poster—DARK MYSTERY, RE-SIDEADNESS OF BEAUTY—then set up a

new scene in a room on the way in. The way was very good, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside.

It was a very good, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside. It was a very good, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside, a few old things, but a single with candles burning inside.

"Haven't any of them read *Faust*?" I asked Dr. Pretorius one evening as he dressed in the back of the wagon. "Don't they know it's a book—that it's all made up?"

"Made up?" Dr. Pretorius raised an eyebrow, then adjusted the angle of his turban. "My dear Pandora, you must learn that people treasure their illusions, especially in times of need. And if their imagination is impoverished, they will treasure the illusions of others. But it is a dangerous thing, to entrust your fears and anxieties to another, especially if the scientific knowledge is spurious or non-existent."

"Then why are you doing it?"

He shrugged. "Because I have no choice. Because I like to eat. Because others depend on me for their safety and well-being. And because, every day, we are in danger—*yes, every day*."

here, in this rural backwater—and so we must say to our supper, then move on if we are to survive.

"And also," he added with a shy smile, "because it is so payable to dress up and pretend to be someone, wearing that one is not. Besides, what makes you think I am not a hiding in plain sight?"

"Faust would have a cleaner robe," I said of mirror that served as my own reflection in the polished, charred bit of wood and darkened my eyes. I perceived, not Kohl, but the effect was the same. My skin was naturally pale that it needed no powder. Heet as I was in dress, a gift from one of her admirers. When I took the ice insect with lace, it was not a becoming color. And I was short.

But Thea assured me that no one would notice.

"It's all the rage in Berlin, these days," she said, showing it for her, the hem skimming my knees. "Besides, it does afford enough fabric to make a proper dress, any more, but you need something feminine."

She wrinkled her nose at Cesare's cast-off jacket and said, "That outfit might make it at the Black Cat or Cafe Monbijou or the Topfkeller. But out here?"

She wagged her finger at me. "We need all the help we can get, *schuster*. And make sure they can't see *those*—"

Her finger gently touched the scars on my throat then pointed at another line of stitches along my thigh. "Or those I heard someone at last night's show talking about Henry Frankenstein's wife—"

"Elizabeth?"

Thea nodded. Her daily visits to farmhouses in each new village didn't just supply us with a place to set up camp. They also gave her a chance to hear the local gossip—who had be-

aved her husband, whose son had run off with the burgher's wife, whose child was ill with influenza.

I was tired of reading performance when, seemingly, and sometimes actually asleep, he would, all out answers to questions posed by the audience. Dr. Prentiss mused the gossip as well, trying to find it in a manner that, most of the time, aroused onlookers. There had been a few occasions, though, when I had had to leave town in the middle of the night after attending a farmer whose wife had strived, or rather whose child bore a strong resemblance to a neighbor.

"The one and only Elizabeth Frankenstein, and I was so happy in these parts, a cousin. News might not travel as fast out here, but it does travel. Don't depend too much on September. Pandora: His intentions are good, but you know what they are for paying stones in Heil."

So, it was that fateful evening I prepared myself, as I always did, to occupy the last slot on our little performance schedule. It would be full dark when I appeared before the audience, but darkness covered what my primitive cosmetics could not.

We were camped outside a good-sized village, near the crumbling towers of an ancient castle. There had been heavy rains a week or so earlier, and the resulting crop of mushrooms had sent children and old women scurrying through the woodlands, gathering a harvest of chanterelles and blewits. Their bellies full after the long famine, the townsfolk were in good temper, and happily parted with a few pence for the chance to witness second marvels in a sagging gypsy wagon. It was an unseasonably warm day—*Altweibersommer*, the locals called it. Old Woman Summer, the trees still bright with a scattering of yellow leaves. Schattengest, as always, had attracted a small crowd.

"How much you want for him?" A portly townsman stood watching Cesare as he set a tub of water before the huge horse

Yet I knew that if I were to reach any one of the men, I would find its flesh warm. For at once a shudder ran through the tent, and blood flowing through their garments, and several minutes I watched them sleep, wondering if the measured gaze would render it a corner piece, as if they were to suddenly turn to him. I did not wait. I then of the caravan where a small table had been set up, served as a kitchen, and picked up a knife. Caesar kept its blade, venomed for goring, as a fish. I turned it in my hands, then pulled up my sleeve to reveal the inside of my arm. My skin felt cold, and pale as the blade pressed above it. A dark stain came from shoulder to wrist, like a barbed wire, made of flesh. I traced this with the knife, feeling the vein, and plunged the tip of the blade into the crack of my elbow, drew it upward.

A prick of cold where steel broke skin. Flesh peeled back from an inch-long wound, like petals opening to the sun. I saw a white spur of bone, strands of muscle marbled black and gray, desiccated veins with a greenish bloom that had a faint foul odor.

But no living blood; nothing that moved or pulsed or gave off heat. I dropped the knife and probed the opening with my finger, and felt nothing. No pain, no heat or warmth, nothing but bands of muscle and sinew thick as vines, and collapsed veins like bits of dirty string. I withdrew my finger and pressed the ragged seam of skin together once more, like repairing the seal on a broken envelope.

"Gravelstone" was right. My flesh was as alive as granite. Dr. Pretorius's sleeping gargoyles were closer to humanity than I was.

"Pandora? What are you doing?"

I looked up to see Thea in the doorway, watching me.

"Nothing," I said. "Let my sleeve drop to cover my arm again, just look up for something."

"I don't believe you." I then strode toward me and took my hand, pulled up the sleeve to reveal where I'd cut myself. "What were you?"

"She stopped." "You wanted to see if you would bleed?"

I nodded as she stared at the bloodless wound. "It is nothing," she said at last. Her expression was resolute. "Did you want to hurt yourself? Did you think that would make you strong or protect you somehow? Nothing you could ever do is as bad as what they will do if they capture you, Pandora. Not even death."

"I'm already dead."

"No, you really believe that." Her eyes darkened to the deep blue of twilight. "Because I don't. I've known too many people who died, and believe me, Pandora, they don't stand around and talk to me inside a circus caravan. Not when I'm sober, anyway."

She turned, stepped to the alcove we shared, and began sorting through the frayed velvet bag that held her meager cosmetics.

"To tell you the truth," she said flatly, "I'm a lot more worried about actually being dead myself. I have a bad feeling about this town. Fraulein Geber told me that Henry Frankenstein has been in touch with some of the men here, trying to organize them into a sort of search party. They don't seem to suspect us, not yet, anyway. But even stupidity has its limits."

I watched as she applied kohl to her eyes and rouged her lips, and told her about my encounter with the man outside.

"A gravelstone, eh?" Her mouth twisted into a wry smile. "Well, it's a living. But you're too good-looking to pass as a genuine gravelstone—as long as you keep your clothes on, anyway. Thank God it's warm tonight—I thought I'd freeze yesterday!"

THE BRIDE OF TRANSYLVANIA

CHAPTER 8

here was nowhere inside the caravan to hide. I've read
somewhere that my cabinet every curtain could be drawn, each
in some where we eat or slept or cooked. Outside I stare
continued with his song song recreation of the human mis-
treated powers. ... *teeping women and exhales their*

I've never believed in escape plans. I believe in my dog.
 I drew a deep breath. The wagon shook as this pounded in the door. There was the unmistakable thud of an ax-head hitting into wood, followed by a chorus of cheers and Henry Frankenstein's triumphant cry.

"Savvy gold piece! And ten apiece for every man of you!"
 I closed my eyes and began to push at the far wall as to feet. The partition behind me shook as the gold piece was ignored it, grating with the effort to push it away. I was still, until I felt the wood beneath my feet start to give under one last deep breath. I drew my legs back, then with my strength kicked.

With a dull crack the wall in front of me split. I pushed forward, clawing at splintered wood until I reached the opening and halt jumped, half-fell to the ground.

Inside the caravan behind me, Frankenstein's minions ran to chop and bash at the alcove. I stumbled away the struggle to catch my breath, and peered around the corner of the wagon and striving to see what was happening inside. As the flickering lamplight washed across their faces, I could see that they were intoxicated, red-cheeked, bleary-eyed, grabbing at each other in a feeble attempt to remain upright.

"Sounds like a bit of a party in there," said one with a leer.

His companion nodded. "Why should they have all the fun?"

They began to paw clumsily at the door. I kept to the shadows and watched them, trying to figure out my best chance for escape. I could outrun them with little effort. They were drunk and flabby to boot. I could probably out-fight them, too—but only until Henry Frankenstein and his rabble heard the ruckus and gave chase.

I was sorely outnumbered. I turned silently and looked at the tent.

... have heard of the Seven Wonders of the World? Now view the wonders of the human mind! He will see through the country as if it were a map, and hear those questions you dare not ask him.

And the seven walls only a few lamps were lit from where I sat. I was still, though I gazed upon a life-sized shadow of the audience in the audience were massed against the lower part of the tent. Dr. Pretorius's tall, spare shadow lay over me, and above them like a dym in the air, a thin light that can grow large as an elephant then shrank to a dark speck.

"And now, he will answer them! Who among you will it be the first to raise his voice, ever wishes? Who is not afraid to kneel and worship the night country?"

Despite the danger I found myself holding my breath as I waited for the first hesitant voice to call out. I knew that I heard was somewhere in that audience, her face hidden within a shadow's folds; if no one spoke, she would.

Her feigned questions were seldom necessary. And indeed, after a brief silence a woman piped up.

"What are the thirty-nine steps?"

Before Cesare could reply, I heard an ominous sound from the caravan—the creak and muffled crash of wood giving way, followed by excited voices. Frankenstein's minions had breached the van's wall.

Swiftly as I could, I retreated deeper into the darkness beneath the trees. A short distance away Schattengeist whickered. If I could reach him without being seen, I still might make my escape.

I had never ridden a horse. I had no idea if Dr. Pretorius's demonic steed would carry me, or (as seemed equally likely) kill me. And the thought of leaving my friends—my family—filled me with such grief that I bowed my head, fighting tears.

But I had no choice. If I stayed, I would be shot by my friends killed if they came to my defense. If I fled, as the knight would certainly pursue me, the shot would be a farewell look upon the shadows of those I was leaving and I crept toward Schattengeist.

"Here—I see her! Dr. Frankenstein!"

An excited cry echoed through the vast night, taken by others.

"Behind the tent! Quick!"

Figures flitted from the gray in the darkness, turned stone. Some of them tumbled, in the darkness, in the fear of the van. The rest rose, lower, in the darkness, in drunken exultation. Last of all appeared the knight. He was attended by the man later, named as the other another, butler man who towered above each in

"Grab her, Henrik!" Frankenstein commanded. "But remember—I don't want her harmed."

Branches whipped against my face as I ran toward Schattengeist, tripping on loose stones and clods. Behind me came more excited cries as querulous voices joined in from the audience inside the tent.

"Remain calm!" Dr. Pretorius's stentorian tones echoed through the night. "This too the Somnambulist has seen."

"Fat chance of that," said a breathless voice just behind me.

I looked back to see Thea duck as a rock went sailing past her head.

"Thea!" I gasped. A few yards away, Schattengeist's whicker became a warning shriek. "Don't—you'll—"

"I'll what? Lose a promising career as a tent-show queen?"

Another stone struck near her feet and Thea stumbled. I caught her and we ran hand in hand to where Schattengeist tossed his great head, razor teeth gleaming in the torchlight.

Thea bent me a grim look. "You're a popular girl, Pandora—
to a better time than we had inside."
I chose to smile another a nicker with intent I doubted it could
hold powder, but there were twelve of them and only two
could hear Dr. Pretorius and Cesare shouting
in the tent. "Thea! Where are you?"

A man stepped toward us, leaning at Thea in her disheveled
head, eyes and soaked costume.
"Take this one," he said, and lunged for her. Thea darted to
avoid a swing, in arm and struck him squarely in the head.
There was a dull reverberation. The man stared at me, eyes
wide. Then his head rolled to one side and he toppled to the
ground, the torch spilling from his hand.

Silence as the other men stared at their fallen comrade.
"Murderer!" one of them shouted.
"He killed Odolf!"

"Get her!"
They surged toward us. I grabbed the torch from the
ground and brandished it like a club. Another man took a
swing at me with a club. I kicked at him and he went sprawling.
Thea darted forward and snatched the club from his hand,
then began striking wildly at anyone in sight.
"You want to join him?" she screamed, and kicked Odolf's
body. "Who's next in line? You? You?"

The injured man groaned and rolled onto his side, struggling
to get up. With both hands, Thea raised her cudgel then brought
it down on his shoulder. He groaned and dropped back to the
ground then was still.

The men weren't expecting this. They drew back into a circle, obviously unnerved as Thea, wild-eyed and breathing hard,
stood with her feet planted to either side of the prone form.

"Come on, *mein herren*," she yelled. "You would not just to see me inside! I this shows for free—"

"Thea!" Cesare's desperate voice rose above the din. "Bring coming, just hold on!"

I glanced back and saw another crowd behind us, milling in front of the tent. Women, mostly, and a few older men and young children. They regarded us with puzzled faces, not whether or not this was part of the act.

But at least one person knew the truth.

"Out of my way! What nonsense is this!"

Dr. Pretorius pushed his way through the crowd and reached the front. When he saw me, he blushed but pushed drew himself up. He shoved aside at elderly and a strolled into the circle of torchlight.

"Witness Pandora!" he cried, and swept us over to indicate me. "The future of Woman-kind! Beautiful as in nature and as strong as the mountain!"

The audience murmured approvingly. Thea looked over her shoulder at Dr. Pretorius, then at me.

"What's he *doing*," she hissed.

"Merely a minor domestic disturbance," Dr. Pretorius went on in his silken tone. "Why, these lovely associates fought off three as many men just last night!"

"Wish she'd taken care of my husband!" a woman in the crowd called out as the rest laughed.

"And mine!" cried another.

"My father use to beat me with a stick like that," a third announced. "Wish he was still alive—I'd have her kill him for me!"

"Pandora!" A slight fair-haired woman broke from the crowd to stand in the guttering torchlight. "My Kurt, he's right there—"

She pointed at the man with the scythe. "He's fathered three brats with a slut in the next town over, but does he have time for his own wife and children?"

As the other women nodded and laughed in agreement, she stepped pulled in a crouch and looked at her husband. Before he could take from his confused look, he was either drunk or bludgeoned in both—the rock hit him squarely in the back of the head. He doubled over cursing. I saw the tell-tale glint of a scythe.

"You're *stupid* angrily. She stared down the mother she stood above the still groaning Kurt, and told the men with the next case. "Well that shuts my sister, and she hasn't seen him for a season. But I can name two other men here who've been chasing themselves or her against her will!"

"See that Cesare ran up breathlessly beside Dr. Pretorius. "Where are Pandora and—"

He stopped, and stared at me in disbelief. Dr. Pretorius lowered his head, and said in a small, simple voice.

"Well, Cesare, it doesn't seem as though they needed a somnambulist to unearth their secrets," he said, *without* a hint.

"A hundred gold pieces to the man who takes her alive!" Henry Frankenstein's frantic voice echoed across the night. He had shed his way through the crowd until he stood opposite me, his face red with fury. "You imbeciles!"

"Why don't you take her?" a woman shouted amid ribald laughter. "She looks like more woman than you can handle!"

Another stone hurtled through the air, followed by another, and another. Henry Frankenstein dodged the missiles, but one struck the man beside him, who swore angrily.

"I've gone mad!" He ducked as a second volley of rocks headed toward him. The other men in the circle looked increasingly uneasy and backed away from us.

"Two hundred gold pieces!" Frankenstein's voice took on the pleading desperation of an auctioneer selling damaged goods. "For god's sake, she's just a woman!"

Kurt staggered to his feet, and by one of his hands
 stared at me, and shook his head.

"I don't know what she is," he said. "But I have a sense
 I'm for the ministers."
 And he turned and ran, stumbling, into the darkness, and
 gave me a quick look.

"I know about it, ladies," she said in a low voice. "You
 one's about to turn. Start naming."

She gestured to where Schattengeist was, and kept her
 eyes on the catch of her eyes and back, and took her
 shadows. I did the same, glancing over my shoulder at
 and Dr. Pretorius.

Their faces were grave, but then I saw that I was not
 head and gazed back at me. Anne's eyes were on the ground.
 His brow furrowed, his eyes were on the ground, and he
 stared at me, then winked.

He was staring at me.

I felt the breath catch in my throat, and an unaccustomed
 pricking at my own eyes. He looked startled to take a step toward
 him when he shook his head and, grasping Cesare by the
 shoulder, stepped into the torchlight.

"I see that the notorious Henry Frankenstein has deigned
 to pay a visit to this charming village. And he has, often,
 employment of sorts to the unlooked-for, then work
 as vigilantes. How very charming. And based on what I
 heard these women say, I have no doubt but that their hus-
 bands intend to turn every pfening over to their hausfraus
 rather than spend their earnings on beer or loose women or
 gambling or—"

Pandora, come on! Thea whispered urgently. "He's giving
 us a way out."

because, as you all well know, despite the various scandals
 he was so recently embroiled in, the exceedingly wealthy and

one who Frankenstein was stranger to the mysteries of
 women.

The woman's face, a few precious minutes. Dr. Pretorius
 made a dash for it. He gestured dramatically from Henry
 and then to the other outlanders, who seemed to see this
 as a sign that he was suddenly dropped into their midst
 and was already forgotten—but not by Thea.
 "What a!" She looked at my arm. "Don't be a rube! It's a
 trick, yes! They're supposed to fall for it, not us."

"Speak to me, people here, and we reached the edge of the
 crowd. Suddenly, Thea turned and sprinted off, heading for
 the gatepost. I followed.

And still no one seemed to notice our escape. Dr. Pretorius
 in a seductive voice drifted toward us above the murmurings
 of the crowd and Henry Frankenstein's furious but intellectual
 protests.

"Damn it, get away from me! I have no money for you—not
 until she's captured—by God, if you touch me again, I'll—"

Thea halted, panting. She pointed to the horse, now just a
 few feet from us. Gnawed bones were scattered across the
 blackened turf, which had been gouged and churned to mud
 by his restless stamping. "Can you break his chain?"

The horse pawed furiously at the ground as I approached.
 He still bore a saddle—neither Cesare nor Dr. Pretorius had
 been able to remove it since we left the stable. His red eyes
 rolled madly and his black lips curled back from his teeth as I
 grabbed the iron links, trying to avoid his flailing hooves.

"Schattengeist," I whispered. "Stop, you idiot—I'm trying
 to set you free."

But the horse was as evil-tempered as he was evil-looking.
 Twice he caught me a glancing blow, before I got a firm hold
 on the chain and tugged at it. The iron bolt Cesare had buried
 in the ground cracked and twisted and finally gave way. I

dropped the chain as Schattengeist reared upon his hind legs, whickering gleefully. As his front legs shot forward he flung onto the earth I grasped his body. From my grasp he fell, and iron and metal spikes then twisted cruelly into his shrieked - not in pain but I did not believe it to be pain - and for once was silent.

But Schattengeist's charged across and fired a second attention to us again.

"There she is," shouted Herr Pretorius. "Now, when she can escape - in - the - fire."

"Get on!" I commanded Thea. She crossed a narrow once more rest of I wish I could describe it. She brought the horse crashing back to the fire. Now -

Thea grabbed a bank of Schattengeist's mane and jerked herself up and into the saddle. She had no time to mount. Jampered on behind her, whapping at the horse with her fists in her arms and kicking in her spurs. She was a second other infernal devil with none of the mercy.

But Schattengeist needed no encouragement. His head rolled wildly, he screamed again, this time in excitement. He leaped on for dear life, and I held on to her as the horse leapt forward sparks flying where his hooves struck the stony earth.

"Where are we going?" cried Thea.

The wind ripped my reply from me. "Away -"

I clung to her and looked back. Like mirages in a desert, the figures of Cezare and Dr. Pretorius and Herr Frankenstein and all the others grew smaller and smaller, ranged in a circle of torches like the footlights on a stage. Their voices ebbed, the torches winked and wavered as Schattengeist plunged on, until at last the forest rose to meet us and Professor Faust's Panopticon disappeared, swallowed by the night.

CHAPTER 9

I do not know exactly how long we rode. Hours and hours, a dream of bushy branches and flying leaves whirling and swirling and the rustling of bird and insect wings in the penetrating darkness. The evenings were too dark to see, save the faint cold wind from the north. The still sleepless proved against the horse's rough mane. I reached a pocket I carried at last the tail and also alert to anyone who might have followed us.

But we seemed to have had a clear escape. I saw no one, nothing save endless miles of forest and a distant ridge of mountains. It was just as well that I had no idea where we were going and no inkling as to which direction we would find Berlin. Schattengeist ran like a beast possessed. My feeble efforts to control him - clinging on the chest, attacking his heavy bridle, kicking my feet against his sides - were ignored.

And once, when I yanked too hard at the bridle, he reared his head to snap at me, teeth clashing like daggers against the iron bit in his mouth and his ember eyes glittering. With a strangled snarl, he wrenched his mouth open, wider and wider, until I heard a grinding noise. Like a rusted lock giving way, the iron bit sprang open and fell in pieces to the ground. Schattengeist tossed his head, and the woods echoed with his gleeful scream as his hooves pounded the shattered bit into the leaf mold.

Otherwise he ran tirelessly and all but silently. Heat radiated from his body as from a stove. A faint smell of burning followed us, as sparks flew from his hooves to smolder in drifts of fallen

leaves. I wondered with growing dread how many there were when— if he grew too tired to swim, he might sink.

Only when dawn broke did he do so. He gave up swimming. His back closed the hole in the ice, and he lay along a riverbank, stepping from rock to rock. He had dropped golden feathers even as he died. I found them in the current. I can hope the surface of the water is not a mirror of autumn mirth. When Schattengeist came to rest, he lay on a Bank of wild geese killed in the morning. I had seen him once. I saw a large black shadow— a dead man— in the water at our approach. Otherwise all was still. The geese and their hands from Schattengeist's mane— the faded pale hair caught between her fingers— still and cold as ice.

"Ugh. Is it morning?"

"I hope so. And I don't know where we are. Closer to, definitely than we were yesterday, if we're lucky.

Thea cast a dubious look at our surroundings. "Closer to nowhere, if you ask me."

She grimaced as Schattengeist snorted and stepped into the river. Water swirled around his legs as he waded deeper, then began to swim toward the other shore.

"Can't you stop him?" demanded Thea.

"You think he obeys my commands?" I asked incredulously. "Are you mad? Just hang on, and we'll hope the city is this way—"

I had let go of the chain hours before. All night it dangled uselessly beside me, knocking against my legs. Now I grabbed it and clung to it tightly as I could, as the horse tugged the river then headed into the shallows lapping at the far shore.

It was as isolated here as on the opposite bank. Wind stirred the branches of the fir. Geese fed in the yellowing reeds. With surprising stealth and no more sound than a

... Schattengeist stepped toward them, head low, the bird against his neck. The geese chuckled and pointed. As they took a black form looming above them, they were as a single troop. Schattengeist's hoof lashed at the water, splashing into the air in a frenzy of feathers. He saved one. It floated on the surface, near the water. Wings spread as a film of red pooled in the water.

Schattengeist dipped his head and crunched the dead bird between his jaws. With much noisy chewing and clacking of bones, he ate it. Feathers and all. Then, nosed trustlessly in the direction of the more. Water boiled and steamed around his muzzle. Thea shuddered.

"Do you think that will keep him for long?" She knotted her fingers in his mane again and looked at me uneasily. "I won't even mention I'm getting hungry myself. Or that I'm not really dressed for a wilderness excursion, or—"

The horse stepped nimbly onto the shore. A few yards from the rocky thicket, black-edged fir trees grew in an unbroken line as far as the eye could see. Above their ragged tips a pale autumn sun was rising, sheathed in streamers of yolk-colored mist. Ravens hopped from branch to branch, clacking as they watched us with avid black eyes. Droplets flew in a bright arc. Schattengeist shook his head. The ravens croaked and lifted from the firs, as the horse raised his muzzle to the sky and gave a weird yodeling cry, like a belling stag.

The sound echoed from the trees. I could see Thea's cheeks pale as she gazed into the black firs.

"This is a bad place, Pandora," she said in a low voice. "Wurzelwicht live here. I know it. I know it..."

"What are Wurzelwicht?"

"Evil things." Schattengeist picked his way among the rocks, pausing to graze on a tangled mass of black feathers

and the rider rose. My grandmothers told me once, even in Berlin they know of such things and a person to anger one.

"I have never heard of that."

Then made a rattling sound that in happier days had been suppressed laughter. "In, ducked. I have heard of Prussia."

"It's a superstition," I cried out. "Nothing lives in the air for crows and blowflies."

"Oh yes? Then who lets it in?" She pointed to a large and charred log in its center. "Because that is not a flock of crows I'd like to run into."

Schattengeist seemed to agree; he drew up, a single flapping pawed the ground. Another bird sailed from the shadow of the trees, a high pitched whistling like a rock cone, set a whistle came from further down the shore, and then another.

"I hat's no bird." Then's hands tightened on Schattengout's mane. "Pandora, we should go now—"

"Too late," I said.

From the woods stepped a dozen figures dressed like renegades from some mad children's book: hair braided with feathers and leather plaits, heads crowned with peaked Tyrolian hats or newsboys' caps. They wore leather boots and filthy trousers, their shirts patched with whatever the woods offered—birch bark, leaves, dried ferns, the pelts of squirrels and foxes. Some had elaborate tattoos on their cheeks and forearms, sunbursts and flaming arrows, arcane symbols and stylized animals—bears, wolves, eagles, elk. They all wore gaudy jewelry—earrings, bracelets, necklaces of glass beads strung with bones and carved bits of wood. One had a torn woman's dress over his trousers, a railroad spike pierced his bare chest, the flesh around it ran and puckered as old leather. Even from a few yards away I could

smell, even a rank animal went of uncured skins and spoiled meat, mudsmoke and sweat and semen.

At various weapons, daggers, bows, and arrows, a spear hewn from a twisted hoe, a scythe hammered into a sword. The weapons were no more than thirteen or fourteen, the oldest not yet over five. The coldest, their leader, bore a snub-nosed pistol that he handled as casually as though it were a slingshot. Then there under her breath. "Now we're in for it. These are Wild-boys."

"What are Wild-boys?"

"But always you see them living on the verges of Berlin. The city men can't afford to feed them, so they strike off on their own and form tribes. They live in burned-out buildings, or by the garbage dumps. Sometimes they make forays out into the countryside, but I've never heard of them living as far out in the woods as this. They're vicious—they'll kill you in your sleep for your shoes. If you don't have shoes, they'll kill you for being barefoot."

"Guten morgen, mein Damen," a clear voice called in greeting.

The leader swaggered toward us. I pegged him as about seventeen, lanky and burned golden by the sun, his dark hair braided with a string of pearls. He wore a woman's kid gloves with the fingers snipped off, and a peaked Tyrolian cap whose frayed ribbon held a grisly array of feathers, squirrel-tails, and bones. A formal morning coat cut into a ragged fringe; mismatched boots, both left feet; dangling earrings and a score of gold wedding bands on his fingers. Around his neck he wore a dirty piece of twine that bore an odd-looking, handmade sigil of bone and wood—a rayed sun surmounted by a crescent moon. Where moon and sun overlapped, someone had carved an eye and painted its pupil blood-red.

The boy locked his pistol at me. "I said, Good morning!" His eyes were a startling pale blue, in a face that still bore the round cheeks and rosy coloring of a young boy.

"I haven't yet been to sleep," I retorted. Heide no longer tense. Her hand grabbed mine as cold. "And so were expecting company."

"I bet you weren't," the boy said. He crouched under the made rudic remarks until he gave them a sharp place in they tell silent. This is Wendigo's name. Name and lives.

I gave him a cold look. Wendigo I never heard of. A boy snickered while another made the sound of a whistle we'd first heard before it appeared.

"I'm Wendigo." He indicated at my eyes. With his free hand he reached for my throat. This is my wife. I aimed to see this in his throat, named for me. I yet, more here, looking at me in you know why?

He swept his arm out and aimed his gun at the water closed his eyes and fired. Ravens rose in a fraction of a second from one of the firs. A single bird dropped to the slush and splashed into the shallows.

As though he'd done something as casual as swatting a fly, the boy turned back to us.

"Why?" he repeated, though neither Thea nor myself had uttered a word. "Because I am Wendigo. And I'm the strongest."

He looked me up and down. He gave a more disquieting glance at Thea before cocking his head to stare at our mount appraisingly. The boy then circled us slowly, keeping a safe distance as he examined Schattengeist through those intent pale eyes.

At last he stopped, and looked up at me again. "Where'd you steal the horse?"

"We did not—" I began, when Thea broke in.

"It belonged to the head burgher of Klout. He came to me in my bed and I slit his throat. Just like this—"

she leaned from Schattengeist's back and raked the air with eagle fingers as The horse whickered and pawed at the snow ground then stood at the Wild boys with baleful eyes, as a glint during them to much as. The Wild-boys cursed an eagle shottingly.

Klout. Never heard of it. Wendigo turned to prod the snow bank with the nose of his pistol. Foxblood bring us back to me.

He had a fringe of red hair and broken front teeth filed a negro pony. He spat, then shot Wendigo a caution look. "I'll kill me," he said flatly.

Wendigo snickered. Fine. Your choice. I shut his eyes again and pointed the gun at Foxblood. The red-haired boy turned and stared at me with bawling. He drew a long-bladed kocher knife from his belt, took a running leap toward Schattengeist. With a deafening shriek, the horse reared, hooves striking the air as the boy ducked and fled into the shallows.

"Foxblood!" Wendigo yelled after him. "Wrong way!"

The other Wild-boys whooped with raucous pleasure as the red-haired boy waded downstream, icy water rushing past his knees.

"Damn you for a coward, Wendigo!" he shouted in a rage. "Get your own demon horse!"

Schattengeist snorted, black lips drawing back from his teeth. Everyone abruptly grew quiet.

"We haven't slept all night," I said. "We're trying to get to Berlin. You can see we have nothing of any value."

"Except for Satan's own mount," a boy muttered.

I looked at Wendigo. He stared back at me fearlessly, and then his eyes widened.

"Leiche!" he murmured.

Too late I realized that my shirt-collar hair ~~clipped to one side~~ exposing the livid scars on my neck. His gaze flicked to my

hands, the faintest glint of a smile, as these as I understand it, are of such value to my eyes that I kept my finger and thumb on the gun in my fingers. His a comical grin, his face as white as the dark. Once again he reached the kitchen and laid his hand on his throat. At last he coughed again.

“Come and eat with us,” he said, his face as white as the dark. “One of the Wilds is expected. They are here for god sake.”

Wendigo’s arm shot out and caught me by the wrist. He was of the head. The boy staggered but I felt I could not leave him as blood seeped from his ear. With out an other word, he spun on his heel and strode into the woods.

“Necchi deere,” said Hela. I wasn’t much startled, for the Wild boy’s leader of the. On the way to the kitchen, I hope, he cooking is better than their wardrobe.

“I hope it is good as Wendigo’s are.”

We followed them into the trees. Broken and taken branches snapped beneath Schattengeist’s feet. I tread. I glared back and saw a sudden foxhoned prancing up the tree. He felt his head and glared with bloodshot eyes then mounted an absence. I heard his teeth at him and hissed. One of the other boys looked up at me and laughed, his expression mingling amusement and admiration.

“You run off from the circus?” he asked.

“Close enough.”

“I’ve never seen a horse like that.” He eyed Schattengeist and admiration gave way to downright covetousness. “I’d have stolen him, too, if I’d seen him first.”

“You would have been lucky to walk away alive,” said Thea. She tossed her head coquettishly, unconcerned that her bobbed hair was nearly as tangled as the horse’s mane. “Schattengeist won’t let anyone touch him save Pandora and myself.”

“What origin?” The boy savored the name with a nod and a shadowy grin. A good name for him. And Pandora — “I suppose you have bedeviled him with an ironic bow have you not?” he asked. He looked at me with an ironic bow. “I have followed the boy next to him. ‘Right?’”

The boy said “Breeding stock, he said contemptuously. “Who needs names?”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

“You can’t live without them when you’re hungry.”

old woodsmoke hung in the air, though I saw smoke in the
Scharfengew's nostrils flared, it is tipped as the smoke
in alarm
"Dear God" whispered Thea. "Look at that!"
Like malignant water towers, skeletal towers of
circle around a clearing. A
tripped off by

Like malign scarecrows who are typecast as being
circled around a clearing. A man ask if he is a scarecrow
around them in a disturbing way that we have to
to suggest him in a disturbing way that we have to
tails and bad. And pelted that some of the
dead blowflies. But what as I could fly there a
him in remiss.

What didn't make the cut was a
think the

think that after living with the scarecrows, a child should have been afraid to see the scarecrows. But there was something uncanny about the scarecrows, a child's quality that made them seem all the more frightening—although given nothing but horror and blood and death, a group of untended children would still play at houses and dolls and soldiers.

And, seeing the Wild boys running ahead of us, mock-fighting and shouting in their treble voices (only Wendigo and one or two others were old enough to speak in a man's tones) I realized that this was true. The Wild boys were throwaway children, as the homunculi were throwaway experiments, and I a throwaway woman. They lived on the verge, but they were alive, in a country where so many had died from starvation or disease or war. The skeletal figures were a warning, but they were also a celebration.

And indeed, as we passed them, the Wild-boys greeted the scarecrows by name, slapping at them fondly or stopping to tuck a feather into an empty eye-socket, or adjust a grinning jawbone where it dangled ghoulishly above a small pyramid composed of the skulls of birds.

MADDER'S BRIDE

"I'm no one to turn," Wendigo ran up alongside us, and we enjoyed eluding away nervously "No one enters without an invitation. Not even I." We were welcome.

"I want an answer now," howl she called from the distance. A make-believe horse of a tree, a weathered gray wagon wheel—these are our WENDIGOS.

[illegible]

...you were sprawling as someone smacked him
before ... him alone! Get up, Zan ...

[illegible]

... That's Manitou, and that's
and Derek Dendeye ... to the center of the clearing

As he named them we climbed the hill. A half-dozen makeshift tents stood between a few spinney trees, made of filthy, much-patched bits of sailcloth that bore remnants of rigging. I recognized the architect's style from a book I had read at Dr. Pretorius's house

"Yes," said Wendigo proudly. "In Berlin, all Wild-boys to live like the mighty Red Men. But we are the only ones truly do so."

"The tipis are from a book, too," said Zane. Like my name, the letters on faded cloth.

He thrust a battered volume at me. One letter had

DER MANN AUS DEM WALDE
ZANE GRAY.

DER MANN AUS DEM WALDE
ZANE GRAY.

This too I recognized from Dr. Pretorius's library, a writer whose books Cesare devoured, but which Dr. Pretorius held

sort of thing, the better prepared you'll be when you meet it. Or her," he added, and winked at me.

"Better prepared to meet things like the Wendigo? Yes. Or you. Other things, too. You've heard of Berlin who has created a woman from nectar and glass. I frowned. Had this boy gotten his story wrong, or was he in fact referring to me?

"Do you mean Dr. Frankenstein? I asked, perhaps his mentor, Dr. Pretorius. Wendigo shook his head. "No. I mean the woman who lives in one of the worst parts of the city, in a shabby, crowded building—but inside, he creates miracles. The woman he has made, one named Lotz, is a creature made of flesh and blood. But her skin is translucent, and her eyes glow like electric lamps. She is extraordinary. I couldn't help it: I laughed. "Is this an older tale than a foreign land, that you've only read of in your books?"

"No! She is here in our country. In Berlin." He hesitated. "I have seen her."

His expression grew distant, solitary and dream-soaked, as though I was no longer in the tent with him, and he sat alone reading one of those luridly enticing magazines.

"She is remarkable," he said. "She is . . . beautiful."

I confess, I felt a twinge of jealousy at his words. Not that I wanted this boy's affection or attention for myself—but that he should be so moved by another creature whose parentage (if I can call it that) sounded not unlike my own.

And that there should even be another creature like myself in the world—and in Berlin, no less! It seemed so strange as to invite ridicule.

"Beautiful?" I scoffed. "How can such a thing be real, let alone beautiful?"

The boy looked at me as though I were joking.

As he said, he blushed out, then immediately blushed. "You're right, he was not alone. And you're beautiful. A woman, I understand, as I had not very understood before. But his own beauty was not always apparent, especially when he was angry. And he was angry, nothing else was. In spite of Dr. Pretorius's influence, his affection, and his insistence that my mind was his greatest asset, I was not immune to that great human weakness: vanity.

"Be careful of your temporary disfigurement," I said coldly. "Death will not be so pitiful, in no time. But I have survived death. I raised my head to gaze at him with more hauteur than I truly felt. "I doubt that Rotwang's beauty has done the same."

Wendigo stared at the scars on my neck. "She's never been dead," he admitted. "But then, she was never alive, either. She's a metal woman—a fembot, he calls her. So she can't really die. She walks among the workers and poor people and speaks of insurrection and violence. A revolution. That was why Rotwang created her. To make trouble," he ended, and smiled with unabashed admiration.

"I'm surprised you're so easily impressed by a metal woman." I surveyed our surroundings, the shabby tent smelling of woodsmoke, the scorched bones in a clumsily woven basket, those much-thumbed penny novels of the American frontier and American aboriginals and demons in the Canadian wilderness. "Or any woman at all."

Wendigo shrugged. "Our country is broken." He sounded older than his seventeen years. "Our world is broken. Someone has to fix it. Rotwang's desire is to build a new city, and then a new world—but he will destroy the old one first, and everyone in it."

I snorted. "An ambitious man."

"He sure is," Wendigo laughed, and looked more like a boy again. "Fortunately, he has lots of help with that."

blood still regarded me with suspicion tinged with outright hostility.

Wendigo looked them all up and down. He began to peer his hand upon the grip of his pistol.

"Our guests are cold," he finally announced.

"Us too!" a boy shouted, then looked abashed. "Well, me anyway," he added as the rest sniggered.

Wendigo gave him a tight smile. "Me, too. But we're used to it. And dressed for it. Our guests are not."

"They're women," said Foxblood. His eyes fixed on me with a look of such contempt that even Henry Frankenstein had never betrayed. "I let them freeze."

A vein pulsed along Wendigo's jaw. "They're our guests."

"Your guests," Foxblood stared back at him instead. "Since when do we let women into our camp? One woman anyway." He cocked his chin toward me. "Not sure what you'd call *that*."

"My camp," said Wendigo. His voice was calm, but his eyes glittered dangerously. In the wilderness, we welcome outlaws. That's always been our way."

"Outlaws, yes. But women?" Foxblood spat, and a few of the other boys murmured in assent. "I came here to get away from them."

"Then maybe it's time you leave." Wendigo stared at the other boy in open challenge. "You and anyone who feels the same way you do."

Foxblood said nothing. But his face flushed angrily, and several of the other boys drew close to him, muttering under their breath.

"You get the impression we've overstayed our welcome?" Thea murmured as she edged up beside me. "Such as it was..."

I nodded, keeping an eye on Wendigo. The younger boys had clustered near him, but most of the older ones seemed ei-

to have thrown their all-giance with Foxblood, or to be at least to see how this little game played out before they decided.

"I'm sorry I couldn't see it, turning out for my benefit, or Thea's. We have to leave," I announced bluntly. "We've already stayed as long as I can."

"That's right," said Foxblood in a low voice. "It's good that someone understands how things are supposed to work around here." He withdrew a knife with a jagged blade and began to toy with it with studied nonchalance. I glanced at me, then at Schattengeist standing impatiently beneath the trees.

"No time for long goodbyes, Pandora," she said under her breath. "Time to run."

Before I could reply, Foxblood struck.

"Pandora!" gasped Thea as he knocked her to the ground. There was a *whoosh*, and his blade slashed the air by my face. ducked then turned to grab him—but not before the blade raked my arm. A seam of flesh split from shoulder to elbow. Thea cried out. Some of the wild-boys cheered as Foxblood staggered back, panting, and broke into a grin of triumph.

"That's how we treat uninvited guests!" he crowed.

I stared at my arm. A ragged line of skin peeled back, exposing bone and twisted skeins of muscle and blue veins.

But no blood.

I felt almost no pain: only a sort of dull, cold ache that radiated from where the blade had cut deepest. I ran my fingers along the loose seam of flesh, pressed the edges of the wound until they folded down, like a clumsily wrapped package. The older, original scars shone almost black against my livid skin, but this fresh wound gleamed violet, like a bruise. I had no idea if it would heal, or if the flesh would petrify or decay, though when I flexed my arm it moved with ease. Only a white flash of bone betrayed where I had been injured.

"There's no blood,"
The whispered words came from a young boy who stared,
me in wonder.

But when my gaze locked with his, he backed away with
amazement turned to terror as he looked around and saw the
he saw Wendigo.

"Wendigo!" The boy's voice rose. "Wendigo, they not dead
ing she's—"

Wendigo stared at me. A tremor of fear moved across his
face no more. He gave me a grim smile as he raised his
his hand closing on his pistol. Behind him, I could see
to her feet again, and I saw the glint of a smile between
her fingers.

I turned to Foxblood. His triumphant grin had faded
into disbelief. He stared at my arm, then lifted his head
gaze at me in revulsion.

"*Leiche*." As he spat the word he recoiled. "Corps. She is
undead."

The other boys followed his lead and backed away their
expressions, too, had changed from fear and anger to hatred,
disgust. Even Wendigo looked at me with profound menace.

"They're right," he said in a low voice. He gestured at
Schartengeist. "You and your friend—you'd better go."

"Go?" broke in Foxblood. "You ask them to go? What are
you afraid to kill them?"

Wendigo turned on him furiously. "How do you kill a corpse!
No!" He looked back at me, eyes steely in his sunburned face.
"*Leiche*! Do as I say—go! Now, before I change my mind!"

His voice shook. The boys surrounded him, younger ones
and older ones alike, and pulled out makeshift weapons—
knives and daggers—or else stooped to grab at vines and
fallen branches to use as clubs. Even Foxblood seemed to have
thought better of his earlier outburst. Now he stood shoulder-

shoulder with Wendigo, the two of them brandishing their
newly-suspect blade and pistol, both pointed at Thea.
Pandora. She tapped her borrowed jacket tight and shot
me a look that said "I would say that this is a good time to say
thank you and farewell."

As though echoing her words, Schartengeist gave a high
he neighed. At the sound, Wendigo turned to stare longingly
at the common-horse.

"We will go," I heckoned to Thea, and the two of us hurried
around Schartengeist. The Wild-boys shrank back as we passed,
but Wendigo—

"Pandora," he called
Then ran ahead to pull herself on our mount, but I stopped
as Wendigo ran up beside me.

"Be wary in Berlin," he said. "Remember what I told you—
there are others like yourself—other . . . things."

He licked his lips as though tasting something bad. "Pfeif-
en, the Whistler. And the fembot. Rotwang is an evil man.
And evil begets evil."

"Like this *leiche*," snarled Foxblood.
"No," Wendigo stared at me and shook his head. "I do not
think you're evil, Pandora. No more than me, anyway," he added.
"No more than anyone trying to survive in these evil days."

"Thank you. I'll be watchful."
"Wait." Wendigo dipped his head. He grasped the symbol
that hung around his neck, the linked moon and sun, and
with a tug pulled it from its bit of dirty string. "Here—"

He took my hand. I could feel him shudder at my touch,
but his eyes held mine warmly as he smiled. "Take this. Go to
the *Onerostrane*—there's a place there called the *Mondkellar*,
the Mooncellar. It's a *nachtlokal*—a private club—but if you
show them this they'll give you entry. Tell them I sent you
and your friend, and that they should help you. At the least

"they'll give you shelter for a night, if we, Marie and some work even," he said with a smile.
 "Thank you," I clasped the sigil gently in my pocket. "If I ever have the chance to repay you."
 "That isn't right. Wendigo insisted to pay for my horse."
 "It's a loan. In exchange for the famous sigil, is it not?"
 "Now?"

He shook his head, lowering his eyes. "I have no route to take. On the market street, they will kill you, they show them that sigil, tell them the truth. I have no choice."
 "Then I take good care of him. Tell me, I'll see you in the next few weeks."

I started to protest but he cut me off.
 "A horse, even that horse, *is not* that horse. It is only be a liability in Berlin these days. No one will sell on your throat for it—*her* throat, anyway. It is good to have. And with all the automobiles, it is a great use in the city these days. Not unless you can eat it. Besides, you would need a mount to get around the city. Not that kind of mount anyway," he said, and made a lewd kissing sound.

"The horse isn't mine," I said. "It belongs to Dr. Pretorius—"

"I give you my word of honor, Pandora. I'll care for it as though it were one of my lads here."

He doffed his cap in the direction of the other Wild-boys.
 "I know horses—grew up with 'em. A creature like that, it wants to run free. It doesn't want to bear riders in a filthy place like Berlin."

I listened, and finally nodded. Not without reluctance, but I had no real choice.

Besides, I knew that Wendigo was right. Schattengeist was no more fit for the city than I was.

I drew no comfort from the thought.

"Yes, well, I know. But you must promise. If—when—I see you, I'll bring you back, and we find our way back to you—
 you—*and* I'll let Schattengeist live in his rightful owner's house."

He disappeared to the front of him and made a mocking bow, as if he was waving the ground, and his animal malice was clear. "Now Dr. Pandora, I bid you *adieu*. *adieu*!"
 I said, "I'll take your name, a kindness from a friend, Schattengeist, is it not?"

"Not here, in the city," Wendigo pointed at the river. "Follow me downstream, it'll take you to the city. A hundred miles on horseback. Maybe less, with the horse you need him. And make sure you bring him to that farm before you reach Berlin. Otherwise someone will slit your friend's throat. I'll be there for a horse like that."

I swung myself onto Schattengeist's back with Thea behind me. The horse shrieked and tossed its head, sending a dozen ravens skirling into the gray sky.

"I'll leave him with your friends outside Berlin," I said to Wendigo, and grasped Schattengeist's mane. "But remember your promise."

Wendigo's face split into a broad grin.

"Thank," he said. "And don't worry. I'll come for him."

Schattengeist reared. His hooves struck sparks from the rocky ground. The Wild-boys scattered as the horse turned and raced down the riverbank, heading south. I glimmed back and saw that the Wild-boys had already disappeared into the woods.

All save Wendigo. He lifted his hand in farewell. I did the same, then turned away. As I did, my injured arm brushed against Thea's.

I felt her flinch. When I looked at her, she would not meet my eyes.

CHAPTER 10

We rode for the rest of the day.

[illegible]

I had no better luck in the
were capable of understanding and
but I was determined to

And, as I might have expected, the
broadest eyes and the widest smile
father Winkler had warned me of. He
over his head, and he seemed to know
Heidelberg, the only old R. Winkler, the
to venture from behind the city street. He
a water might add to it now, but then
as he was such he would have been by now
And Henry himself would

And Henry himself would not leave a safe refuge through the thickets. I was sure of that. Well-equipped with guns and other weapons not to mention extra food, super finks who would do his bidding, Henry Frankenstein would have tried upon us by now.

I did my best to hide my tears from Ena. She dozed for much of the way, her head resting upon my shoulder. In sleep, at least, she did not wince at the touch of my cold skin.

[illegible]

... the ...
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...the
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...low here, Pandora," I then said as she clattered in
...here. "I'm sorry to trouble the good women, but this

"You come along if you like."

"But yourself?" He snorted.

woman who looked almost strong enough to wrestle a sad-
o-o-o challenge should the need arise. She brandished
ancient firearm, pointing it from me to the other back
me again

"Stop." With her free hand she held up a lantern and said at us "Another step and you're dead."

Her eyes widened. I could see the thought racing through her head that I was dead already. Before she could say more, she pulled Wendigo's talisman from my pocket and held it up.

"I was given this as a token by one who knew me," she said that you'd care for our horse. Until we see it, it is not a rightful owner.

The woman let her breath out in a low hiss. "Oskar reached to touch the carved disk holding back the moon. Her gaze softened, and a faint smile made her suddenly much younger. 'He is alive, then. He is well.' Then she glanced at me again and her hand tightened on her gun. 'If you have harmed him—'

"No," Thea broke in hastily. "He's fine! Wendigo is all himself now. He and the other Wild boys are out of the woods. We were looking for water. That's why."

The woman peered around us to where Schattengrass took form loomed just inside the barn. "I hate your horse!"

"Yes," I nodded and slipped the disk back into my pocket. "Wendigo said he'd come for him in a few weeks."

"Wendigo?" Her smiled broadened. Unexpectedly she laughed. "Is that what he calls himself now? Some name from one of his storybooks?"

She relaxed her hold on the gun. "He's my brother," she explained. "Oskar. He ran off the first time because our father beat him, because . . ."

She looked at us and shook her head. "Well, because he had more interest in those Wild-boy friends of his than he did in I angel I angel girls. Maybe he's changed his mind, eh?"

Thea winked at her. "Could be."

The woman laughed. "All right, then. I'll tend your horse for him. Looks like a monster. Is it a Pergamon?"

and my best to explain Schattengrass, without mentioning just how much wreaking havoc in that well-kept barn. The woman showed little interest, though, she wanted only to hear of the deceased first me, then Thea, made a small kitchen. I told her what I knew of the boy who'd called himself Wendigo, while Thea tried off to find a mirror and wash basin.

"I wish Oskar would come back and stay with me," the woman said wistfully when I'd finished. "I could use his help. And I worry about him out there."

She glanced at her weapon, still clutched in one work-roughened hand, then at me.

"You know it is not safe, even here in the countryside," she said in a low voice. "Last night I heard a terrible howl in the chicken coop. Fox, I thought, or a tramp—and I know how to handle both of those."

She setted the gun and aimed it at me, but I only stared at her not unflinching. After a moment she dropped it again and went on. "So I went out to the shed."

She hesitated, and I asked, "And was there a man there?"

"No." She shuddered, licking her dry lips as though she tasted something bad. "One of my hens was dead—that one," she said, and gestured toward the cookstove. "But another one—my best layer, too—something had torn her apart."

"It was a fox, then."

"No." She shook her head emphatically. "No fox did this. Something had ripped her in two, like this—"

She dropped the gun into her apron and demonstrated with her hands. "Just so. Split her apart like she was a wishbone, then ate her—but not like a fox does. This way—"

She chomped her teeth together. "I like a person, but what person—what man, even?—tears a chicken in two then eats it

raw? Because whatever got into my head, she's not
 raw. At some of the bones, too. Like this—"
 She made a crunching sound, then dashed again and was
 drew the gun from her apron. "I *agghenrichen*! Mother!

These are terrible times, *Schwester*, when a man acts like a
 bones of god knows what creature. I pushed aside the image of her mother's face and
 image, too, one even more distorted by the cold murder
 had heard of the villainous Wendigo had speared a child in
 and his mortal woman and the cold murder.

You mean *den Pfeifer*—the *Widder*? No, *den Pfeifer*
 out the darkened window. Yes, *den Pfeifer*—
 of him. I have no children, to write about. I have
 from my former sister-in-law, her daughter, *den Pfeifer*
 his father's oldest son, he writes for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.
 They set all their reporters on it, trying to find out the
 And also to claim the reward for it.

She tucked the gun back into her apron, then closed the
 stove and opened it, letting out a plume of steam. "I don't know what killed my good hen—that unless the
 steam. I don't know what killed my good hen—that unless the
 Pfeifer is eating those children."

She straightened, covered her hands with two heavy towels,
 and placed the chicken on a small table. She flapped the towels
 to cool them, then turned, hands on hips, and looked possi-
 edly at my neck. Her mouth opened to form a question, but
 before she could speak Thea came back into the room. Her
 hair was slicked back and her face cleaner, if a bit too well-
 scrubbed for the sort of company I suspected she'd soon be
 keeping.

"We'd better leave, Pandora," she said. "If we're to reach
 Berlin before midnight, and—"

She stopped and inhaled deeply, then gazed with round
 eyes at the chicken steaming on the table.

Wendigo's sister took carving knife and fork and
 raw. "I will give you some to take with you."
 I saw a reflection of her face in the doorway again, laden
 with a portion of roasted hen and a few slabs of coarse
 bread, as I stepped in a threadbare cloth. As we turned to go,
 the woman bowed to me, then my hand.

"Your injuries," she asked in a low voice. She stared again
 at my neck. "What—what happened?"

I stared back but said nothing. After a moment she
 took her head, pulled back the sleeve of her worn dress
 and her arm fattened from wrist to elbow with long
 scars.

"My husband," she said. "He pushed me into a thicket
 with me, so that I could not have dinner for him when he came
 home from the fields one afternoon. I was pregnant and lost
 the child. My little brother killed him when he found out. I'm
 not sorry. That's when Oskar ran off the second time—to
 the woods with those friends of his. He has a good
 heart, my brother. But this is not a time for good hearts, only
 strong ones."

Her gaze met mine, at once cold and accepting. "I'll see to
 your horse, *Schwester*. Here, wait—"

She turned back inside and returned a minute later with a
 battered oil lantern. "You'll need this. The oil won't last you—the
 city's good three hours from here—but it will help some. Take
 care on the road, sisters."

"Thank you," I said. "Tell Wendigo—Oskar—that I will
 reclaim the horse when the time is right."

She nodded, waving as Thea and I trudged back along the
 gutted path leading to the main thoroughfare. At the barn I
 stopped to say farewell to Scharfengest.

"I'll see you again," I murmured, stroking his neck. "Dr.
 Pretorius will find you, I promise."

But would he? Would I ever see Dr. Pretorius again? My thoughts were uneasy ones as Thea and I waited in silence. Not even warm chicken and good bread were enough to turn my mind from what the woman had told me about the thing that had raided her henhouse.

Ungeheuerliche monstrous. My mind turned back to a night weeks earlier when I had awoken and listened to the sound of something, a noise through the woods. Its clumsy gait, its strength, its size trodden to pulp where it had staggered back and forth, as though desperately looking for something.

Or someone. I thought of the form I had seen, or more I'd seen, in the forest; I thought of Henry Frankenstein's creature that towering figure aflame, his great misshapen head turned sideways to stare at me as his hands worked the air as though writing the words there.

Wife. Friend.

"No," I said.

"What?" Thea looked at me quizzically.

"Nothing," I said, and we walked on without speaking toward Berlin.

In those hours my thoughts turned often to my lost companions—more than companions—Dr. Pretorius, Cesare, the Children of Cain; even Goli the six-legged dog. Monsters or insects, some people would call them, yet they were my family, the individuals I had come to love most in this world. I thought of Henry Frankenstein, and of how he had turned his back upon his creations—his children—deeming them unnatural and thus unworthy of his affection. Humans—ordinary humans, anyway; what the world called "normal"—seemed to limit the range of their emotions and attachments.

And so Henry Frankenstein could marry his fair Elizabeth, beget a child, then disown his other children: myself and the

monster creatures who (in my instance, at least) would claim my blood thought for themselves.

My wife seemed to have no reservations about creating slaves—or, at least, to her husband, and thus his work in clearing a court of law or a roomful of peasant farmers. I had no doubt as to which of us would be judged the monster and which the upstanding German citizen.

As it drew dawn I wondered, when it might be otherwise, whether any hope of dawn was a distant one. I guessed it was close to midnight. We were near Berlin. The glittering mirage that had glowed like a beacon in the distance now began to break into distinct jots and blocks of light, where faraway tall buildings and spires shone through the night. Thea carried the lantern, but its wan light did little to dispel the darkness immediately around us—it barely helped us to avoid the potholes and ditches that were everywhere. There'd been no money for even rudimentary road maintenance in years.

Still, as we continued the road gradually started to widen. Its ruts and furrows became more the work of petrol-fired vehicles and their human drivers, than horse-drawn carts or bad weather. Farmsteads were replaced by villages; the villages gave way to the city's sprawling outskirts. Automobiles passed us, veering wildly as we stumbled to the roadside and Thea tried vainly to flag down one of the passing vehicles. Instead of woodsmoke and the tang of fallen leaves, I could smell burning coal, petrol fumes, tobacco, the hot stink of cooking grease.

"*Klapperkiste!*" Thea shouted as another clattertrap vehicle jounced past us, sending up a spray of dust and grime. "Boneshaker!"

She flung the lantern furiously after it. The oil had long since run out, but Thea had clung to it anyway out of childish fear or perhaps in hopes that we might sell it when we reached the city. The automobile sped on; the lamp smashed into the road.

Thea swore and bent to remove one shoe. "You can't carry me, Pandora. She rubbed her swollen foot, looked over her shoulder at it's a good excuse for not dancing, right? I don't want to look at this."

She held up the shoe, its heel a broken nub. "There's no way she can make me dance tonight. No one she gets me a new pair of shoes, she said, 'I'll be up pose she could, though there's no guarantee, this shoe is too tight.' But were not going to wait until then. I don't want to wait the carved tilisman Wendigo had given me. The Minutemen that's where Wendigo said we should go."

I hea shrugged and jammed the shoe back on her foot. "I know—but I need to get back to work. I don't want to know well, if I ditched her for another club. She has a proprietary interest in my career."

By now we'd reached one of the main roads leading down into the city. Berlin's busy lights obscured by black, towering, overhanging and ragged trees. The stink of outdoor latrines and overflowing drains won out over smells of frying potatoes and spilled beer. People hurried along the darkened streets. Couples returning home from a night out, students—all young men—singing cheerfully and drunkenly, prostitutes, some barely more than children, others old enough to be grandmothers. Many of them recognized I hea and called out to us, taunting or imploring her as we passed.

"Thea! How's the air up there, eh?"

"Oooh, Thea's stepping out with someone else tonight!"

"Hey darling, we miss you! Get back on the line!"

Thea waved but didn't stop to chat.

"She means the chorus line, of course," she said as we walked by a girl in a cat-fur jacket and knee-high, apple-green boots.

"Of course," I said.

We walked together at the Loppkeller for a while. Before she'd ever specialize and become a boot-girl."

"Thea, I've tried and blew a kiss at another girl, wearing a boxy sailor suit and cap. 'Polly there, she's a Nutte—lots of money, she says it down most of the girls are *kentroll* girls—' you know, registered with the police. But when we're going to the club, not to look like a schoolboy. I had heard of such things, of course, but to see the world around me so abruptly transformed into a vast marketplace was still a shock."

"I've everything has a price, Pandora!" I asked. "Of course not. It only seems that way at night. I've everything has a price, Pandora!"

"I don't. I think I am too... specialized... for your friends."

"You'd be surprised, Hey!"

Thea drew up short as an automobile pulled up alongside us, engine chugging. Two young men in evening clothes peered out at us. One—the driver—waved a monogrammed silver flask.

"Thea!" he cried. "Long time no see!"

I hea grinned and leaned into the car's open window. "Hullo, Hansie. Hullo, Bernard. Where you boys off to?"

"To see Professor Unrat."

Hansie, the driver, handed her the flask. Thea took a sip, held it out to me but I demurred, so she passed it on to Bernard.

"Herr Professor's giving classes at night now?"

"Classes!" I he two young men burst out laughing. "You really *have* been away too long! No, he's working at a private club these days. He performs—you know, sings and dances."

Now it was I hea's turn to look shocked. "The Professor?"

Hansie nodded. "What has he gone mad?"

"Crazed with love," said Bernard. "I don't even know if I married a showgirl! See where it's gotten me!"
He leaned out to elbow Thea. "It's said that you was to come along! You could see for yourself!"
"Sure!" Thea looked at him. "We could use a ride at a new show club's he playing?"
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"You're joking, right?" Thea glanced at him. "You're showing her surprise!" Thea looked at him. "You're showing her surprise!"

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Thea looked at him. "We could take a ride at a new show club's he playing?"

He nodded. "Me too."

Bernard opened the door. "C'mon, hop in!"

He climbed into the vehicle and Hansie swung it to a stop. Bernard offered Thea a cigarette from a silver case. "Thanks." She waited for him to light it, then blew a stream of blue smoke into his face. "I can't believe the professors around here. And to a showgirl! Guess that's why it's so cold tonight. You finally love over!"

Hansie laughed. "So who's your girlfriend, Thea?"
"Where's my manners?" Thea made an exaggerated gesture of dismay, and leaned in to press her cheek to mine. "This is Pandora. She's my, uh, cousin. From the country. So be polite."
"She doesn't look like a farm girl," said Hansie. "Dora, eh? Or is that Dodo?"

The two students laughed, while Thea slapped Bernard, protesting. "She is not a dodo!"

She glanced at me and adjusted my collar. "Even if she is dressed like one. Your tuxedo jacket," she explained. "And

can't be a show club dodo—um, women who dress in more than a few—have!"

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"Someone took heartiness," said Bernard, "but he murdered her and left her organs. After some time you want to leave a woman in a room, and she is not all the better for it."

"Bernard put her heart in a box and she was not all the better for it," said Bernard, "and she was not all the better for it."

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"A friend, eh?" He dropped his cigarette and pinched his nose, then shrugged. "Well, that one, friend, is not one you wish to see. I know what she is like."

He pushed the door open, came out, and passed me on our way as we walked past. I saw the shadow of her face at the window to the Mooncellar.

CHAPTER 11

Frank, Jane, and Bernard were in, where to be seen. A hatches, k
knowing in a low, wiggling, her head to the time, counting on
the wall, hood in the next room. When she came, I see
as I saw her, he had a butterfly tattooed on his back.
"A check, or a check?"
"No, it's a check."

Another woman, not as tall, than my thigh, saw a man in
front of the hatcheck station, counting, out of the. She gave them
and me a bored look and returned to her task.

A few other people strolled in and out of the foyer, laughing
or whispering intently, in various stages of intoxication or
andress. A woman attired not unlike myself, though her tuxedo
was immaculate and far more expensive than Cesare's, and
she wore a monocle in one bright blue eye. A dark-skinned
woman well over six feet tall, wearing a bustier in the shape of
a birdcage, and nothing else. A man in a white shirt in matching
a monos. Flanked by a brace of naked men whose bodies had
been painted to resemble leopards.

"You know, Pandora, I don't think you're going to have to
worry about standing out at the Mooncellar," confided Thea
as an enormously fat man wearing a wedding dress with a
full satin train swept past us. "So it's all the same to you, I
may leave you for a bit and test the waters. See if I can find
my way to a hot dinner, and maybe a better pair of shoes.
Aren't you hungry?"

I shook my head. "Not really."

"Suit yourself. I'll find you later."

“She’s not there!” he said breathless and begs to me
Lulu! Lulu! False alarm come back!”
“False alarm false alarm”
The words drifted through the dim light
gan to return to their table
set chairs to right
Hec

The words drifted through the air like smoke and began to set chairs to rights. He thanks I turned relieved as someone when saw it was only the give it a moment.

I turned relieved as someone picked up my letter and
 then saw it was only the quartet. They gave me a short notice
 gave it a quick once over, took some notes, and then
 place, then nodded to me. Well, thank you very much
 like me to dance when I'm not, it's not the
 that brings sales down.
 The first

The girl I was with, I like her. I like her. I like her.

friend do you know where she went?

She dragged. No. Don't see her now.

We both turned at the door.

She shrugged. 'No. Didn't see her then.'
We both turned to Professor Llewelyn and the stage door. His thin hat stuck up around his bare ears and his clothes were dishevelled.
'They're gone!' he

We both turned as Professor Lestrade entered the stage door. His thin hat stuck up around his bare ears, and his clothes were dishevelled.

"They're gone," he cried as the other musicians gathered about him. "Lulu and I hear, I heard them scream—someone's taken them. A deformed woman. I half-saw her as the lights dimmed..."

He looked around wildly. With that terrible premonition I get sometimes in dreams, I knew that his glance would fall

"Her—" He barely whispered the word as his shaking hand pointed at me. "There, she—she—she—she was the one brought here. It's her. I'm sure of it!"

Around me, murmurs of excitement. The cigarette girl's eyes widened. For the first time she seemed to really, look at me, or perhaps it was that she chose now to see me, colored in the nightmare hues Professor Uric's tone suggested.

[illegible]

...the Professor's blood face
He looked fairly transfixed with
-he truly believed he had

I grew with growing dismay

...and I heard
...in the darkness.
...a pretty girl and, I saw with growing
...of the Mondkellar. I knew enough
...the gularity and suggestibility of crowds, to recog
...of our pitiless, nay dangerous, for me to protest
...lay in escape.
... "Quick!"

"Grab her!" shouted the saxophone player. "Quick!"

but no one seemed anxious to grab me. Instead they stared at horror, a horror I couldn't grasp until I heard someone behind me whisper, "The Pfeifer—I heard her when the lights went out: she was whistling—it's her! *She's* the child murderer!"

"Stop her!"

"Block the doors!"

I grasped a chair and hurled it as a group of men rushed toward me, grabbed another chair and used it as a weapon as I fought my way to the door.

It was a futile effort. There were too many people for me to fight. I looked around desperately and shouted Thea's name—and at that moment the room once more went dark.

This time the accompanying screams and shouts were nearly frantic. A wave of pure animal terror buffeted the room, an overpowering fear I was not immune to—it sickened me.

was withheld from me, that is an Iambic pentameter. To use it to strengthen it." As he spoke his voice quavered in some strange way in such a powerful instrument. Not a word broke a shiver on oak. I took away a shiver and a shiver in the air.

"Withheld" said and returned in a gasp. "How many creators, you mean?" Henry Frankenstein.

He nodded. His face contracted in a more terrible way of brute rage. Again he struck the wall with his fist. A time was rewarded by a curved broken piece of wall. He nearly hit enough to climb up. He was not alone. He reached for a slab of granite as long as his arm. He held it, high, as though it were a shield. He then smashed it against the wall. A crack in the wall. A faint wind stirred through the air. He was not alone. A faint outline of buildings, the awful glare of a gaslight.

"He did not create me!" The cell rang with his thunderous voice. "He served merely as a conduit between a heap of dead flesh and the fire of heaven! He would be the New Prometheus stealing fire from the gods—but he is nothing but a serpent and a crawling thing in the night, a gravedigger who seeks to enslave those weaker than himself!"

He turned to me then. The granite slab fell with a crash as he held one hand to me, beseeching. In his eyes burned a flame of something I did not, could not recognize, an emotion I could not bear to look upon. Again I turned away.

"What make of man is it who is so weak that he can only seek his adherents among the dead?" The creature's voice dropped to a rumbling whisper. "What manner of man will struggle to create life but cannot trust another living thing to control its own thoughts and actions? What kind of creature will create or destroy the female of his own kind?"

As we sat on the floor then was not a brute's, but a man's. His expression told us hatred, no fury, only a blunt plea for a knife. A knife wedge I did not possess.

Do not know, I murmured. He dropped his head as though I had done it. The strain was his words so chastened me that my own tongue came out broken and harsh as the creature's.

"I believe," he said, "to be monstrous." I went on, struggling to keep my voice even. "And others do as well. Whether it is known by words or by actions, or whether it is somehow of itself, I do not know."

"I do not know," he said, "I do not know." "I do not know," he said, "I do not know." "I do not know," he said, "I do not know."

I opened my mouth to reply. He held out his hand to silence me. "They have befriended you—some of them—I have seen this myself. Not just Dr. Pretorius and his companion, but others—strangers, people you did not know, people who did not see at the men's sight of you. The forest boys, the woman in the farmhouse, the girl who travels with you and her friends, the people in that damnable place—"

He gestured fiercely at the dark passage whence we had just emerged. For an instant he looked savage and diabolical as he had in the minutes before he destroyed Henry Frankenstein's laboratory. I watched him and my unease again hardened into anger.

"How dare you follow me?" I stooped and grabbed a chunk of granite. My strength was not equal to his, but it was considerable. I took a step backward toward the hole that gaped onto a black alley, toward freedom. "You pursue me and hold me against my will—you're no better than he is!"

corpses and mangled limbs, but my brain's a once more
And it is my own
He bowed his head as he spoke these words, his hands
thinking, almost without will. I found myself staring at him
my hand to touch his grotesque forehead to feel
"It is indeed," I said softly.

His eyes flickered so that his gaze fell on the ground
animal's untrodden stare but a moment, and then he looked
by fear or pride or reason, understanding in the wild, to add fear
I had never seen such a gaze before, and I knew it was
And, save in him, I have never seen a man's eyes so
him, he lifted his hand to his brow, as if he were blind.

"Friend," he whispered.

"Yes," I said, my voice breaking. "Friend."
For a minute we stood thus, unresponsive. I could not hear
I felt a sudden sharp pulse—a throb of life, as though I had
been stabbed.

"Blood," the creature said quickly. A crooked smile crept
across his gaunt face. "Your heart has learned its lesson, and you
a job to do."

From somewhere in the tunnel behind us came muffled
shouting. The creature straightened. "We should flee," he
said. "Not all men are monsters. There are those who would
help us. But I will not bear you against your will."

He extended his open hand and said, "Friend. Will you
come with me?"

I clasped his hand.

"Gladly," I said, and stepped with him toward the opening
in the rubble.

CHAPTER 13

As we stepped through a dark alley so choked we could not run
as he walked, a shadow of pursuit behind us grew louder, voices
or the faintest whisper of a gunshot
The creature urged me ahead of him. "Follow
me closely. I keep them at bay."

We stopped when the alley opened into a street
the light of a glow like with dawn. Trash cans and a
broken machine leaned against the corner of a brick
building. I looked back to see the creature some yards behind
me, and a small crowd of men. I recognized none of them
from the Mooncellar. Some bore torches; one pointed a gun at
the creature. With a curse he fired, but once more his shot
went wild.

"Don't waste your aim!" a man shouted. He waved a torch,
then sprinted in front of his companions. "We want fire to
kill it!"

The creature stood in the alley, his back to me. As the man
with the torch approached him, I could see the creature's distress
grow keener. He waved his arms and grunted, as rage gave way
to fear.

"See!" the man shouted gleefully. He feinted with the blazing
torch, and thrust it at the creature's head. "I told you, animals
are afraid of fire!"

The creature slashed vainly at his attacker, as first one then
all of the other men began to circle him. With a roar, he looked
over his shoulder at me.

"Go!" he shouted.

"Ah, yes Smith! Well a man needs a more than a few
said Wyman He he a cigarette and about a dozen matches
ashes into the pocket of his tweed overcoat. "Well I am
made a big show of saying himself the new year's resolution
you know heronally sealing up his mind as if it were
thing. Meanwhile, here's an anecdote."

He gestured for all at once towards "A Little Boy"
to educate himself—that's how he
to us for turning a blind eye to his hand

[illegible]

"Bit of a mouthful in the schoolyard tongue, and Christopher. I mean not that our friends' society is bad, but it's a difficult name to wrap your tongue around. Hephaestus 'Smith,' I thought, that's more like it—you know, Hephaestus being a blacksmith and all. It's a good solid name, Smith, no nonsense there. Easy to remember. Easy to spell, too," he added with a glance at the monster. "We've got to get back to work on that, right, friend?"

"Hephaistos?" I shook my head, marveling. "But that's so strange! Because my creator—Septimus Pretorius, perhaps you know of him—his friend and companion Cesare gave me the name Pandora. And Cesare told me that, in the oldest version of the legend, it was Hephaistos who created Pandora."

I turned to stare at the monster in wonder. At the same time, both Christopher and Wylan looked at me, their own surprised expressions mirroring my own.

PAPERBOY'S GUIDE

"who I would have seen it—you're Septimus's woman!"
"The one he lost the one he's been tearing
I said
laughed and clapped his hand on his
"Why, he was my biolog
yearly"

"I've seen it easier," said Wystan. He looked in at them thoughtfully. "It's your hand."

"I should have seen it earlier," said Wystan. He looked me up and down, stroking his chin thoughtfully. "It's your hair - different."

"I touched my head." The fire burned much of it away. I cut it afterward.

"A fortunate fall." Wystan rubbed out his cigarette. "Because Septimu

"Was it a fortunate fall?" Wystan stubbed out his cigarette and paced briskly across the room. "Because Septimus and Cesare are here, in Berlin."

"They are!" Of course I should not have been taken
back—everyone ends up in Berlin, eventually. "But where?"
"They're in hiding. They've been searching frantically for
you, Pandora, but it's been difficult—Frankenstein's done
everything he can to pin the blame for his murders on Septimus
He's got deep pockets, as I'm sure you know, and a little gold
goes a long way these days."

And Henry talks a good line," said Christopher. "People gather to hear him, he throws a bit of money their way, a few vague promises— and Hey presto! You have a crowd of vigilantes screaming for blood, all looking for someone to blame for their poverty and unemployment. It's not much to feed on, but starving people will take whatever they're offered."

house. He creaked beneath no shoes where patches of ice and water had frozen. Unseen slim green veins, the branches bent and and occasionally their snow-laden tips started in a shiver, the frightened woman turned gaspingly to the side, but she barely suppressed a sigh. Once we passed a stone wall that held the remains of a fence. A few old hedges and a few trees round its perimeter, and I again felt the light of the day as the tribe camped beside the banks of a mountain river.

But after some time I noticed that the trees seemed somehow watchful, as if they were observing, though I felt no ill will. I felt a strange glow deep thing seem to be squaring. The dark, dense forest of overpowered the scents of spruce and fir, and I knew he creature to draw up along the tree, I noticed he takes matter, my own ease.

"Here," he said. He grabbed a sapling thick with moss and snapped it in two. "The creature is nearby."

I could see nothing that hinted of a monster. He was far ahead of us. Wistan and Christopher trekked on, snooking and conversing amiably and with no apparent care as if they were still in their lodging house and not this ominous forest.

"Not too much farther now," Wistan called back at us cheerfully.

I saw no trail. But Wistan strode without hesitation through the underbrush. He seemed to find a path where none existed, like Theseus following Ariadne's clew. When the thickets grew impenetrable, he would lightly tap a briar hedge with the tip of his umbrella, and suddenly an opening would appear, through which even the monster could pass unimpeded.

"Here," said Wistan after another quarter-hour. He paused, Christopher at his side, and pointed to a dark patch a few yards ahead of us. "See?"

Wistan but saw nothing save the ragged outline of a large hedge, its upper branches thatched with dead leaves and snow, and birds caws. Christopher took in my blank stare and smiled.

"It is impossible, really. I never know how he does it," Wistan said. "He is so close here, beside me, as if he were walking to put him the monster lumbering behind me. Yet he is. Christopher grasped my hand and pointed at the top of the hedge, where a thin rim of slate gray sky gleamed. "See that bit of sky there?" he said. "I look just beyond it. I try to look, I find that works best."

Wistan, keeping my gaze fixed upon the patch of sky, said as though a curtain had risen, the trees seemed to fall away and I found myself staring at a small, ramshackle house, care-dumped with a thatched roof, tucked disconcertingly between two larger, windowless buildings in an alarming state of disrepair.

"The forest grew around them," explained Christopher. "I believe Korwang somehow encouraged it to grow. You know, like training a vine to climb a dead tree."

"Science," intoned Wistan somberly. "The mysteries of the universe have yet to be plumbed. Mind you don't trip on those rocks."

He hurried on. Christopher waited for the creature and myself. "You'll have to be careful getting in the front door, Smith," he warned. "Not really designed for someone your size."

It was like the crooked house in the English nursery rhyme, tinged with a faint malevolence and that strong glow of overheated metal. Scraps of twisted iron were scattered near the entrance, like the leavings of some mad blacksmith. Also broken glass, shattered alembics and test tubes, coils of wire and electrical transformers. I wondered why the roof hadn't caught ablaze and indeed, when I looked up, I saw

That was when we learned that *Dr. Hoffman* had disappeared. Cesare's threads pale face went mad all over. I saw my sister was with you.

He broke off and turned away, then slung open a wall. Christopher and Wystan looked in by the light of the carried him to a sofa where they sat her down gently. "Cesare," *Dr. Hoffman* murmured, "I am so glad to see you hand upon the unconscious Cesare's new, this time, head gravely. He has been put in the most tender care. Works for his sister and sister. He took it very hard when children has taken to him, with."

"Where are they?"

Dr. Hoffman gave me a wary smile. "They are safe. And my will be very glad to see you, and so, but I must go away. I has hidden them in a wing of the hospital, and so, and so, if we are laid siege. The rest of us might escape, though it was to be hard, but they are smart and shrewd and would be easy prey to Frankenstein and his thugs."

I shivered, and tried not to think of the fate that would surely await those fragile, grotesque creatures if they did fall into Frankenstein's hands. Death—or, worse, vivisection, their small lives snuffed out and their imp' bodies stuffed into laboratory jars or vials.

He thought sickened me. My emotions must have been evident: I felt a powerful hand descend upon my shoulder there to rest tentatively.

"They will come to no harm," the creature pronounced in a low voice. "I give you my word. I will guard them with my life. As I will you."

I fought the urge to push him away; to flinch or fight him off. Instead I drew a deep breath, and nodded.

"Thank you." The words came with an effort, but I meant them. "I will do the same for you—for everyone in this room."

asked. *Dr. Hoffman* beside Cesare's prone form, at the corner where they stood in muted, earnest moment. "I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

"I will be here."

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"I will be here."

"I will be here."

Thea—our friend. Our family. Our friends. Frankenstein to the likes of Henry Frankenstein!"

Ahead of us, Rowang darted into a side passage. He paused to make sure we did not see the way in which our friend leaving Dr. Pretorius and Smith and myself in a room with doors.

"She is not my friend," I heard Smith say. "And there exists no Dr. Pretorius and Smith and myself in a room with doors. He resembled a wind-blow and after a while he was gone."

"No family," he cried. "The hypothesis of the last of the moments before buried was in this sudden death of a man resolve. 'No friends. Who are we?'"

He poked me with a horn and a staff together. "Who is Pandora, if not your friend? Not more than that. A soul mate, for who besides Pandora is truly to be found with you now, and find then perhaps a better world find one, but perhaps even to find one, to create one, to bring a new and truly modern world into being."

Smith looked taken aback and uncharacteristically grave as Pretorius's words died into silence and our creator gazed at both of us challengingly, as though expecting a reply. I started back, but after a moment stole a look at Smith.

To my chagrin, I found him gazing now at me. I looked away, then caught myself.

"No," I said in a low voice. I forced myself to face Smith again. "Dr. Pretorius is right. We are your family. I—I am your family. Your friend. Not by birth, or force of circumstance, but by choice. Just as I chose Thea, and Cesare, and the Children of Cain. They may act differently—"

I gestured fiercely at the wall, indicating the world beyond "Frankenstein and his like—men. And women. They may

see. And that would kill us. But not all humans are like you. And more of them are like you. That is why I will go now and help her—help whomever Henry Frankenstein has taken prisoner. There is always a choice, and I will mine."

I stopped and saw Dr. Pretorius gazing at me with pride and a mixture of tears in his eyes. "We said, Pandora," he murmured. "I clasped my hand, drew it to his lips, and kissed it, then I kissed the hand of Smith and Wytan into the side passage. I kissed it, the hand of Smith."

"There are so few of us," I said at last, and heard the way my voice faltered as I spoke. "Your strength would be a great asset. But I would not compel you to come with us. Even if I could," I added, and gave him a wry smile.

He said nothing. I stood awkwardly in the still corridor, and finally turned to follow the others.

"Wait." Smith's great hand closed around my wrist but gently. "Perhaps because I am a man, not a woman. I have more experience than you of the evil men can do."

As he withdrew his hand, I looked down to see the scars marked upon his arm. Not scars like my own, which are evidence of creation, but the terrible results of his near-fatal encounters with flame. I thought of Prometheus stealing fire, and of how Smith had been consumed by the conflagration, not once but twice.

"You do indeed," I said softly. I let my fingers rest tentatively upon his arm, his skin cold as granite. "I would not blame you for leaving now."

"No," he said. He straightened. "And my hand guards the ceiling. 'I will go with you—with all of you. Even if it means confronting the fire for the last time. Better to brave Hell with true companions than Heaven with false ones.'"

He looked down at me and smiled. His presence was so beautiful, but at that moment I would rather have been upon his stern, ravaged lips than upon any other. Adieu, my friends."

Come then, I said, and took his hand. Let go hand a friends."

CHAPTER 14

The stage was made in by old-fashioned gas lamps that threw a glowing emanation on the stone floor and walls. It wound back like a snake out of the swartback roads that traverse the city, and only avoided of going up it to reach possibly down. The weight of the entire city seemed to press upon my along with a cold it more suitable to a tropical climate than Berlin in winter.

"Here they are."

I heard Wystan's terse voice not far ahead of us. A minute later the corridor doubled back on itself yet again, and Smith and I were once more face to face with our companions. Rotwang's anxious expression turned to relief when he saw I was accompanied by Smith. Wystan smiled and reached to shake Smith's hand.

"Thanks for casting your lot with us, old man. Levels the playing field somewhat."

Dr. Pretorius simply beamed.

"Is it much farther?" I asked.

Rotwang drew an enormous keyring from a pocket, his wild hair sending ragged shadows dancing up and down the walls. "Far? We're headed into the very bowels of Berlin. If you're not too dainty for such a metaphor. But to get there, we first have to pass through my own private labyrinth." Part of it.

He held up a key then thrust it into what appeared to be solid stone. As though sliding into moist cake, the key slid into some hidden lock. Rotwang leaned forward and pushed, indicating that the rest of us should join in. We did so, straining

curse from Wytan, and Smith's angry growl, when he so
difficultly squeezing through a turn in the passage.
But gradually the darkness began to diminish. Wytan
us, Rotwang halted and watched it. I would not
"Listen," he whispered.

"What?" I demanded, but he in His passion clung
fighting to catch his breath. Then in the silence
creep into the passage with a low, guttural sound,
sound, maddeningly terrible to hear. It was the sound
"The Whistler" breathed Wytan.

I listened.
And yes, faintly, the sound was there. It was the
I'd heard when the lights went out in the Mondkellar.
Halt of the Mountain King.

"It's him!" I whispered.
Smith's hand closed round mine. I drew a breath
and murmured, "Do not fear, Pinfold. Despite his attempt
to speak gently, his voice echoed through the corridor.
"Shhh!" said Rotwang, and peered into the shadows. Now
gave him a hostile look.

"They thought it was me," I explained quickly, before my
companions could argue. "Back when the lights failed in the
Mondkellar. I heard the Pfeifer whistling in the dark. Everyone
heard him, but then someone accused me of being the child
murderer. That was when I fled."

"Good move," said Wytan dryly.

"She had no choice," rumbled Smith. Just in front of us.

Dr. Pretorius lifted a warning finger.

"Listen!" he hissed.

The whistling continued, but more urgently now, the notes
rising and falling rapidly, as though to keep pace with a runner's
breath. I am not sensitive to hear oneself, but how close to you, at

though the river's icy water pumped
through my dark veins.

Almost the whistling stopped. I heard nothing
in the hall, from my companions and a soft curse from
Smith. Then, from somewhere not far ahead of us, a mut-
ter asked a question. A soft, insinuating voice. Substant
that once asked a question. I could not in the out-
side, though it belonged to no child. I could not in the out-
side, though I hear its reply, only the bright tone of a
mother's purring and sweet as birdsong, followed by a
sharp and ominous silence.

"No!"
I broke free of Smith's grasp and shoved my way past the
others, grabbing Rotwang's torch. My footsteps echoed like
falling stones as I ran.

"Don't be mad!"
I shouted, and the cries of the others as they gave chase.
I ignored him, and the cries of the others as they gave chase.
Before me the tunnel twisted like a corkscrew, and suddenly
opened onto a chamber that seemed vast after the confined
passage. In fact it was scarcely larger than the inside of Dr.
Pretorius's caravan. I stopped in the entrance, fighting panic,
and shone my electric torch until its wan beam picked up a
shadow in the center of the room. It leaned over a second,
smaller shadow on the floor, and I recognized the round-faced
man from the Mondkellar.

The Pfeifer: the Whistler. He was hunched over the pros-
trate form of a young girl, her face turned toward me, milk-
white, her eyes huge and dark and empty.

My breath caught in my throat, he had already killed her.
Then the same sweet voice I'd heard earlier cried out plaintively.

"Mutter—hilfe!"

"Mutter!" The Pfeifer looked at me, then laughed and
glanced back down at the child. "That is not your mother,
child! Nor will she help you."

THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Before he could speak another word I was cut off
"stop," I hissed, and grabbed him by the throat. The
screamed "I leave her you monster."
"Monster?" He choked on the word. His eyes
flashed and he slammed him against the wall. His eyes
glared and he said "It's you"
I felt his voice rise
I stumbled into the

"I've got you against the wall, the touch of my hand
The girl's voice rose to hysterical pitch as she staggered
stumbled into the chimney. I placed my hand on her arm
rapid, as Smith hit mouth a torrent of abuse burst from
"Stupid girl! He is not your enemy!" I said
"Here now," said Watson. He took a forward and knelt
side the girl, shielding her so that she could see a man
himself. "Everything's going to be fixed. You had better
tell me your name."
The girl smiled. "My name
'That's right," Watson said.
arch from the

"That's right. Weston stole the torch from where it had fallen. See? Weston was light, and we're going to find out how light outside, and everything going to be just ducky."

The girl frowned. "Ducky?"

I turned back to her.

"I'm just ducky," he said. "I was back outside, and everything was all right."
The girl frowned. "Ducky?"
I turned back to the Pfeifer, rightening my hold on his arm.
His cheeks became a strangled gap.
"Where are they?" I said through gritted teeth. He tried to shake his head and I smashed him against the wall again.
"Don't waste your breath on lies. Tell me where they are. Henry Frankenstein and the rest."
The Pfeifer made no sound.

"There!" He gestured frantically toward the far side of the room. "Through there—the main passage—Unterstadt—behind the sewage tunnels..."

He started coughing and I let go of him. Behind me, Rotwang's figure loomed, with Dr. Pretorius at his side.

PARADISE'S CRIME

"Threat him!" said Rowwang in disgust. "The man who slays
admits."
"I can't help it—I want to stop."

...said the
...he
...said "I mean to" he cried "I can't help
...said "You must believe me!"
...was a tormented man of terror and self loathing
and he rolled wildly as an injured dog, "I have tried," he
moaned "and I've tried! And when I sought help at hospital,
the doctors can't cure it, help me, he said he had the means
to help it but first I must find more women for him. He said it
had to be so, I could—"
He said neither shall you as Rotwang kicked him again
He said, "I know you could save their children— is that

He saw a but first he must find out what he was dealing with. He could not
hand as he was a man. He could not
He saw a but first he must find out what he was dealing with. He could not
hand as he was a man. He could not
He saw a but first he must find out what he was dealing with. He could not
hand as he was a man. He could not

Rowang twisted to stare at the creature. "Are you mad? By his own admission, he's a murderer—the worst kind of murderer, a child killer! He—"

"I said NO!"

Smith pushed Rotwang against the wall. The scientist caught himself before he could fall to the ground, with an effort straightened. He glared first at the Pfeifer, then at Henry Frankenstein's monster.

"You dare defend this filth?" He turned and spat at the pathetic form writhing at his feet. "I have heard of honor among thieves—is this honor among rank brutes?"

"He is no brute." The voice was so low and measured that it was a moment before I recognized it as Smith's. "He is a man, as much as you are. As much as I am. A bad man, a sick man. But

he is a man and not an animal. And you must deal with him as such, with justice but also with pity.
 Rottwang's face contracted. He gazed at Smith as though he spoke total gibberish. "Pity?"

"Yes," Smith looked at the child. His mouth tightened with anger but with some of his eyes close to grief. He stretched out his great hand to touch the girl's forehead, and I saw his fingers tremble. She stared at him, blinking, then smiled. "That is what separates us from those brutes who devour us each."
 "He's right," repeated the Pfeifer. He patted a piece of my display. "I am ill as much a victim as he." He looked around wildly until his gaze fell upon me. "I had kidnapped

"As she is," he cried, pointing at her. "Hence Frankenstein swore he'd help me—please, let me tend her."
 My companions and I looked at each other.
 He can lead us to Frankenstein, said Dr. Pretorius.

"What of the child?" said Wystan. The girl, I thought, with her finger in her mouth, she stared at us with wide eyes but seemed remarkably unafraid. "We can't leave her here. And we certainly can't bring her with us."

"You'll have to bring her back," Wystan. I turned to the child and asked, "Do you know where you live?" She nodded solemnly. "Good."

I glanced at Wystan, then at her. "This man will take you home, then. Do you understand?" Again she nodded.

Wystan looked pained. "What, I have to miss all the fun?"

"They also serve who return lost nurselings to their grieving parents," intoned Dr. Pretorius.

Wystan frowned, then shrugged. "Oh well, I suppose you're right." He stooped to retrieve his umbrella, setting the girl back onto the ground. "At least Christopher won't lord it

over me. I get her home, then find my way back here as fast as I can."
 "It is a night he more useful if you could monitor the situation up there," said Dr. Pretorius, and he gestured at the ceiling. "In the event that we do not return. You know, alert the proper authorities and such."

"I'm sorry," said Wystan, and he agreed. "Good thinking, nothing more." But we'll hope it doesn't come to such a drastic state."
 We made hasty farewells. Wystan shook hands with each of us, and cast a furtive eye upon the Pfeifer.

"I make sure the police know about that one," he assured me under my breath, then picked up the little girl and began striding down the tunnel, back toward Rottwang's flat. "All right now, also I like to hear. The Dong with the Luminous Nose."

"Mel," the girl cried, as the two of them disappeared into the darkness.

Rottwang turned to the Pfeifer, withdrew a small pistol from his pocket and aimed it at the little man's temple. "Suppose you show us where Dr. Frankenstein has made his temporary quarters. This will help remind you, if you find your memory's gone a bit dim."

The Pfeifer moaned softly, then gave us a sickly smile. "Of course, of course. This way—"

He scuttled down the passage like some great overgrown deathwatch beetle, pausing now and then to wipe sweat from his brow or to puzzle over which tunnel we should pursue.

I soon lost track of where we were. It seemed inconceivable that Wystan, or anyone else, would ever be able to find us. The walls were now composed of metal and concrete rather than stone. The tunnels grew wider, ceilings and walls curving down around us as though we walked through a vast quip—until, Rottwang explained, was pretty close to the truth.

"We're in the old sewage tunnels now," he said, and sniffed orientally. "Truly the bowels of the city."
 Dr Pretorius's nose wrinkled in disgust. "Please, dear,"
 Rotwang replied with scorn. "Especially when we murder the company you keep—ambulatory corpses, children,

I maintained a haughty silence, but beside me it was now Smith's ill-suppressed rage. "Better a corpse with a conscience than a robot without," he tumbled

Rotwang glared at him but said nothing more. We continued without speaking. A deep uncertainty upon my face created by the primeness of our surroundings—the dark passages that cast an embalmed gleam over all things—on everything Rotwang and Pretorius and the Pfister the last time, grew fainter but now, crowded in by dark, overhanging, scorched metal and organic decay, the occasional damp, scum underfoot, when one of us stepped upon a salamander's millipede. Now and then the Pfister would let out a cry or a sudden piercing whistle, whether of disgust or delight or alarm, it was impossible to tell.

But gradually the tunnel leveled out. We could all walk abreast now, and still have room for our absent companions. had they only been at our sides. Only the Pfister continued to scurry ahead of us, head bobbing as he wove back and forth across the passageway.

"Here," he announced abruptly, and stopped.

In front of us, the tunnel ended in a metal wall, perhaps twenty feet high. Two immense round doors, bolted and hinged with hardware as large as I was, loomed in the half-light. The doors resembled those on illustrations I had seen of submarine boats, bulging slightly outwards as though behind them something huge and terrible struggled to escape.

"Is there?" I took a hesitant step forward and pressed my hand against the convex curve of one of the steel doors. Rust dripped off at my touch, and a dead spider I gasped.

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Yet it seemed impossible that we could enter any room was so serious, but reason should tell us that in the noontide I could speak of long from the coast of the sea. I was tired with patient care, and I should have been a little more then walked into the room with the others, but I did not. "Pandora, wait."

Smith gratified me before I could take more than five or six

"Look," he said, "and please"

The four of us stood at the top of the stairs. In the amphitheater there were, in seats, a few of the laboratory equipment such as we had. I hoped to see the microscope, the spectrometer, the balance, the glass tubes, the various viscous substance that looked like honey.

Dr. Pretorius joined us. As he faced downward his sweet face grew gray.

"The devil," he murmured.

At the bottom of the amphitheater, rows of cots filled the floor like a make-shift hospital—or morgue. There were motionless figures on the cots, covered by white sheets. A small nightstand stood beside each cot, and tubes and wires trailed from beneath the coverings.

Oddly, as I stared, it seemed less like a hospital than a bizarre dormitory filled with patients like Cesare, all fallen magically into slumber.

But no sleepers drowsed as silently as these. There was no stirring of breath, not the faintest twitch or moan of dreams disturbed; no soft motion as chests rose and fell. No hand plucked at those white sheets.

And no head stirred as I started toward the floor of the amphitheater.

As I was about to go, I heard Dr. Pretorius's warning voice, followed by the heavy tread upon the floor and the creature's heavy tread upon the floor as I got and them all as I ran, not pausing until I reached the door.

Some of the others paused on the level just above where I was. The silence filled the chamber, as terrifying as it was. I felt possessed of a strange certainty that I had known this place before—no, not this place, but this silence.

Because despite the brilliant, unshaded bulbs that hang far overhead, despite the presence of my companions and all the other things, I felt utterly alone.

More than simply alone I was marooned, bereft, thrust into a darkness so great that everything around me disappeared. Walls, ceiling, floor, even my own body. It was as though I had fallen into some invisible, atomic and there dissolved. Flesh and hair and bone—my cells burned away in an ancient conflagration that left nothing but this single spark of consciousness, an atom of horror insubstantial and deadly as a virus.

Dead, I thought. I am dead.

It was not an insight, but a memory. Dr. Pretorius had once explained a discovery he had made during the process of creating life.

"It will be years before others learn of this," he said, "decades even; but, dear Pandora, perhaps it is knowledge we deferred."

What he had learned is that it takes a long time for a person to die. The central organs go first—heart and lungs and kidneys, the blood pools and coagulates, the muscles go slack, and then rigor mortis sets in.

But the cells within our bodies continue to live and sparkle like the flaming rubble stirred off by a hot adhesive when it is

THE DRIBE OF FRANKFURT

But, Dr. Victor had assured me that the brain is like a sponge, and men and women will learn how to navigate this reef explore it, that is, trace the luminous pathways between its poles, open electricity the way and means of transportation to gods. That is when we will truly learn how to be noble Prometheus!

At that moment, frozen it into place, I saw Frankenstein, operating the machine, his death. The abyss of the unknown.

At that moment, frozen at my spot at the foot of Frankenstein's operating theater, I remembered that my death—the abyss that had swallowed it—was not only a flickering consciousness that there was no God and no heaven, but also, somewhere in the distance, that I knew that, then there was also somewhere in the distance, a faint, distant, and almost imperceptible sound of a foot stepping on a head that had grown.

A roar sounded in my ears, a thrumming as though my head had grown engorged with blood. I saw nothing, but then the roar subsided and another sound pulsed inside my skull, a woman's voice—muffled as though she spoke through a heavy scarf. The voice fragmented into a series of pops, a sound like tiny bladders bursting. The woman's voice grew hurried then exultant. I heard a plastic gasp, as when a drowning man surfaces above the water, and then a second, familiar voice—Henry Frankenstein's—followed by another that I recognized. "Pandora! Pandora, can you hear me?"

"Pandora! Pandora, can you hear me?"
I shook my head.

I shook my head—once more, it seemed, I had one to shake. Then I blinked—I had eyes again as well—and looked up to see Dr. Pretorius. He grasped my hand and spoke to me in a low monotone.

"She's entered a fugue state," he explained to someone I could not see. For a moment my earlier terror rushed back—the woman's voice, the realization that I was dead.

ANDREA'S BRIDE

... Dr. Pretorius, flanked by
... stretched the rows of cots. I was not dead.

... No, I'm here. . ."

... Dr. Pretorius looked around worriedly, but
... turned back to me and
... must have tri

"No, I'm here."

Dr. Precorius looked around worriedly, but he turned back to me and said, "You must have triggered the presence of so many like yourself that we would have to disassociate. If I did know what we would do, I would have forbidden you to come."

"I demanded the memory of what I had just experienced," I said. "Not in the manner a nightmare has claws in me. Nor in the manner a nightmare has a consciousness, more like the persistent trace of one's consciousness, more like the persistent trace of an illness, a sense of pain and dead embroilment within my vein."

My gaze fell upon the nearest cor- I pushed Dr. Pretorius

My gaze fell upon the nearest cot. I pushed Dr. Protorius aside, grabbed the corner of the white sheet, and yanked it off. What lay beneath might have been myself, reflected in the mirror of my bleakest dreams. A woman lay upon her back as though asleep. Her exposed flesh was blue-white, like weak milk. A seam ran down the center of her chest, and opened to reveal her organs—heart, lungs, her stomach's flaccid pouch, a knotted rope of intestines. Instead of blood, silvery wires that traced the labyrinth of veins beneath the surface of her skin. My gaze moved from this cavity to her throat and face, the unruly tracery of stitches that indicated where two corpses had been pieced together like an infernal doll. Even in death, her face possessed the loveliness Rotwang had spoken of: delicate features, full mouth, her dark eyes open in unseeing vigilance, staring forward. Above it, her skull tilted back, like the spine of a book, revealing the mesh of flesh

Another seam ran across her forehead. Above it her skull had been split and the upper part pulled back, like the split halves of a mollusk shell still connected by a thin web of flesh. Within the opening glinted a gray pink object like a huge

She stepped toward the lands
at Rorwang, and even the
temple-dancers
Men

Men will never change. The passion and the will
change. I had a wife once, a very good one, but she
because I can change and I. What he said to me
their creations, in particular themselves when she
I had no reply. I knew the truth in what she
Elizabeth was wrong.
And yet the people ever ruled
I thought of the legend
Indiana. I know

I thought of the legend in which I had found the moral to be drawn from it. When some one is so unfortunate as to be drawn into a place, including that very amidst despair and confusion, he is to serve as an example to the monster had, he is to respect the monster.

I had been created to serve as an atone to a monster as brave
yet the monster had changed, and pursued his evil, capable in
my respect. If Henry Frankenstein had ever been capable of
such a sea-change, and I do not believe he was, he would not
have the opportunity now. And yet, his followers had sought
to destroy me, or enslave me, as the pathetic and monstrous
Pfeiler had preyed upon helpless children.

But there had been other

and added

But there had been other men, men who had cherished and aided me without asking anything in return save my friendship. I turned to look upon Dr. Pectorms, who gazed back at me with a melancholy smile, his hands open as though in benediction. Beside him stood Rotwang, who despite his own dubious ambitions and fears, had accompanied us to this dark place and nor fled. I thought of Christopher and Wystan, of Wendigo and Cesare, all of whom had seen beyond the husk of a woman's corpse, to glimpse the mind within my ravaged shell.

PINDOL'S WRIDE
 thought and Smith looked at him, his towering
 head and red face, his deep-set eyes fixed upon
 her. What he told her was nothing for my
 ears. I was a woman and

...longer of South ... her deepest ...
... had a red face ... he felt ...
...ing out of what he felt ...
... a way ... because he said nothing for my ...
... because he acknowledged it was my decision and ...
... back to Elizabeth Brankenstein and her colorit ...
...ounded trail in that echoing space but ...
... Elizabeth! You may b ...

"My dear friend," he sounded loud in that echoing space, "but I do not want to run with you, Elizabeth. You may be good, but you are by their very nature evil—or it may be so, really. You called yourself with an evil man, you helped every other. But your experience is not mine. If I may have a choice, I will remain here with my friends. And I will not allow you to ensnare these others."

He stepped toward the platform that held the glowing cylinder that my fingers through its mass of braided wires, and grasped the receptacle with both hands. It was warm to the touch and seemed to hum with life, as though I clasped a live golden tree.

I looked at Theo, her dark hair matted on her forehead, her eyes turned upward in a small smile. I blinked at something rising in my eyes—ears—and without thinking cried her name aloud.

"Thea!"

Her smile widened; the closed lids twitched then, miserably, opened.

"Pandora?" she murmured, and tried to turn her head. "Is that—"

"She's alive!" Rotwang rushed to Dr. Pretorius's side. He bent to press his ear against Thea's chest and she pushed him aside.

"Hey," she said thickly. "Get off me, you..."

Quickly Rotwang turned and yanked the sheet from the cot beside her. Lulu lay there, her black lacquered bob seemingly untouched, her lily-white face no paler in death than it had been in life. Rotwang lowered his face to hers, listening, then crowed in triumph.

"This one's alive, too!"

"Traitorous fool!" Elizabeth Frankenstein screeched at the fembot. "You didn't slay them?"

The robot woman stared at her unperturbed.

"There was no time," she replied in her calm, chiming voice. "You demanded that I see to your husband first. I did as you requested. I will see to these others now."

"It is too late for that."

Smith's voice thundered through the chamber. Two long steps and he was at my side, his great hands beside mine as together we held the golden cylinder and lifted it as though it were a great glowing chalice. Rotwang and Dr. Pretorius had grabbed Lulu and Thea, and were helping them to their feet. The young women stumbled, then straightened and wrapped the white cerements around themselves, Grecian-style.

"Pandora." Smith gazed down at me, his broken face gilded with the cylinder's eerie light. "Are you sure this is what you wish?"

I nodded. The cylinder throbbed in my hands. Its warmth had burned me; its glow deepened to a fiery crimson and all were whipped against my skin in lashes of flame. A woman escaped Smith. He was rigid with terror but willing to withstand it for my sake.

"Yes," I said. "This is what I wish. They are dead. Let them rest in peace."

We raised the cylinder above our heads. Its aureole blinded me so I could see nothing save the silhouette of Henry's Frankenstein's monster, black against that radiant false sun. There was a strangled cry from the top of the amphitheater, as with all our strength we hurled it at Elizabeth and the fembot, and Henry Frankenstein between them.

"No!"

With a shriek, Elizabeth turned to flee. A deafening explosion tore through the chamber. The shining cylinder crashed onto the floor and erupted into a penumbra of flame that enveloped the three figures. Elizabeth's shriek became an anguished scream as her husband's living corpse toppled onto her in a deadly embrace. Flames engulfed them and Eli's crystal form, as though it were blazing wine poured into a goblet.

Yet the Fembot did not move, even as the two beside her grappled and burned, until all three were swallowed by the conflagration.

"Pandora! This way—"

Someone pulled me from where I stood, gazing as though bewitched at the destruction of Henry and Elizabeth Frankenstein. I turned, and saw the room around me ablaze. The braided wires had turned to tributaries of flame racing across the floor; sheets of fire leapt from cot to cot, mercilessly blinding me as the havoc wrought upon all those lifeless forms. I could not see who my savior was, only stumble choking through the haze of smoke

and flame, fire licking at my hands and face, the very air above so that it hurt to breathe.

And then, suddenly, blessedly, there was darkness. The house died away as though a door had been slammed. Around me wises called out to one another in panic and relief; there was a pale flash, and the feeble glow of an electric torch flickered across the faces of my companions—Thea, Lulu, Dr. Pretorius, Rowing and—

"Smith!" I cried, and grabbed his arm. "You're all right . . ."

"Pandora," he said, and smiled.

"No time for merry meetings yet!" exclaimed Dr. Pretorius. He swept his torch so that we could see the tunnel around us. "That blaze will consume all that remains of the chamber, but it will consume us as well! Fires knows nothing of friend or foe. Follow me—"

We stumbled through the tunnel. When I glanced back, I saw eerie flashes of gold and scarlet that grew larger, infernal fast as we ran, the heat pursued us as well. More than once Thea and Lulu stumbled, until Dr. Pretorius and Smith grabbed them and half-carried, half-pulled them through the passage.

"I can't go on," Lulu gasped. "Please, I'll only slow you down—"

And then a familiar sound rang through the dim space: a high-pitched, bone-freezing whicker, as of a blade slicing through solid rock.

"That's Schattengeist!"

I staggered forward, then shook my head in amazement as a figure loomed in front of us—many figures, though the central one towered above them, a blazing torch in his hand as he greeted us from where he sat upon the demonic horse.

"I thought you'd never get here," he said, and grinned.

"Wendigo!" I stared at him, dumbstruck. Behind him I could just make out several other figures.

"Schattengeist" Dr. Pretorius cried in delight. The horse raised his head, snorting, showering everywhere as it let out a piercing shriek of recognition.

"Thank you I'd take good care of him," said Wendigo. He slid from the horse, then helped Dr. Pretorius hoist Thea and Lulu onto Schattengeist's back. When he was finished he turned and continued on.

"But how did you find us?" I asked in disbelief. Wendigo shrugged and cocked a thumb over his shoulder. "My tribe has its ways of getting news," he said, as three men stepped from the shadows. "And we have friends everywhere. Especially—in the darker corners of the city."

"Hullo, Pandora," said Christopher. "Smith, you're looking exceptionally well, all things considered."

Couture ran to the great horse and grasped his sister's hand. "Thea! You're alive!"

Thea shrugged, then grinned. "Sure I'm alive." She ran a hand through her filthy hair and grimaced. "I've had hangovers worse than this. Not many, but a few."

"Well-played, Pandora." Wystan reached to tap me with the tip of his umbrella. "Come along, we've engaged a hire-cab in the street, but he won't wait forever."

Dr. Pretorius climbed onto Schattengeist. Behind him, Thea and Lulu peered down like figures from a rather louché Greek vase.

"Pandora!" Thea blew a kiss and Lulu saluted as Smith and I joined the others on our final trek from the Understadt.

CHAPTER 15

Schattengeist's hooves strick sparks and his fiery breath a glowing was corona in the shadows ahead of us. But gradually the darkness lifted, until we were outside.

I had been anticipating daylight; instead a hazy dusk greeted us, hardly more bright than the tunnel we had just fled. But the chill air, redolent of smoke and rotting cabbage, was sweeter far than any fragrance I could imagine, and the foggy Berlin twilight more welcome than the brightness down.

"Here we go," announced Wylan. He strode toward a long black automobile parked along the curb and threw open the back door. "Your chariot awaits."

In the front seat, the driver yawned and hardly seemed to notice the bizarre parade that proceeded into the dim street: Dr. Pretorius and Thea and Lulu astride an immense, flame-breathing black horse; the sepulchral Cesare; Wendigo in his Tyrolean hat and macabre ornaments; Wylan sporting his black umbrella and Christopher with his boyish grin; Rotwang looking around furtively.

And, last of all, Smith and myself.

"Where you headed?" the cab driver demanded. For the first time he seemed to take us all in, and with a frown shook his head. "What is this, a circus? I don't have room for all of you!"

Thea slid from Schattengeist's back. Lulu laughed, then with a toss of her bobbed head somersaulted to the ground. The cabdriver gaped in admiration.

"Take us to the Mondkellar," she ordered, and hopped into the back of the car. "Next floor show's in half an hour."

"No one," said Thea. She grabbed my hand and started to pull me after her. "You coming, Pandora?"

I hesitated, then shook my head. "Not tonight. Maybe another time."

Then she threw her arms around me. "Don't forget!" she said. She kissed Cesare goodbye, tousling his hair; then hugged Dr. Pretorius. "What about you?" she asked.

Wendigo warily stroked Schattengeist's muzzle, then pointed behind the cab. "We brought this along, Schattengeist and I. I figured some of you might be looking for a way out of the city."

And yes, there was Dr. Pretorius's gypsy caravan, neatly spinned, with a row of grotesque faces pressed against the window, eyes rolling wildly and mouths open in delighted howls.

Christopher stared at the Children of Cain, then shook his head and turned to the cab.

"We'll go with you girls," he announced.

He kissed my cheek. "Nice meeting you, Pandora. Hope you'll stop by again some time. I have an American friend I'd like you to meet, a singer—she performs at another club not far from here."

He clambered into the car with Thea and Lulu. Wylan shook hands with Dr. Pretorius and Cesare, then with me, and last of all with Smith.

"I'll miss you, my friend," said the Englishman. "But you know where to find us."

He too climbed inside the cab. A chorus of farewells rang out as the engine roared to life, and everyone waved as it disappeared into the night.

"Rotwang?" Dr. Pretorius pointed to where Wendigo had already led Schattengeist to the caravan, and was settling him into the traces. "Care to join us?"

The scientist shook his head. "Thank you, Septimus. But no I have further research to do here. My prototype was destroyed."

but I have her successor to perfect. And this time, perhaps, I will not fail."

With a self-mocking bow he spun upon his heels and hurried back down the alley.

"Well then," said Dr. Pretorius. He surveyed those who remained with a smile. "That leaves us almost where we started. Pandora, Cesare, myself—"

"And me," called Wendigo. He leaned over to tap the caravan window and smile at one of the Children of Cain inside. "You gotten fond of these fellows here—like something out of one of Blackwood's better stories. Mind if I join you?"

"Of course," said Dr. Pretorius.

He turned his gaze to the looming figure beside me. "And you, my friend—will you accompany us as well?"

Smith made a terse sound deep in his throat, then looked down at me. "It is not my decision to make," he said.

I gazed up at him: the sadness graven into his face, the furrowed lines left by fear and rage and sorrow; his deeper eyes, fixed now upon me with no threat, no fury, nothing but unspoken longing.

"But it is mine," I said, and took his hand. "Will you come with us?"

The creature stared at me. His mouth parted, and hoarsely as though he had just learned to speak, he voiced a single word. "Wife?"

I cocked my head and thought.

"Better than that," I said at last, and tightening my fingers around his I drew him toward the caravan. "Helpmate—and true friend."

THE END